Ghosts of Piccadilly

G. S. Street.

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THE GHOSTS OF PICCADILLY



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THE
GHOSTS OF PICCADILLY

BY

G. S. STREET

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'THE TRIALS OF THE BANTOCKS'
'A BOOK OF ESSAYS'
ETC. ETC.

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NOTE

SEVERAL of the chapters of this book have appeared in *The Monthly Review*, and some of them in *Putnam's Monthly*, and the usual acknowledgments are offered.

G. S. S.

PREFACE

WHEN prefaces are read at all they are read most often after the rest of the book. And nearly always, I imagine, they are written after it. But I am writing this before a line else of my book is done, and on this ground I venture to approach the courteous reader with the hope that he also, if this beginning should catch his eye, will be unusual and read the preface before the book. I wish to place before myself, as well as before him, precisely, more or less, what I shall try to accomplish.

There is no new, salient fact to be told of Piccadilly. The keen eyes of the late Mr. Peter Cunningham and of Mr. H. B. Wheatley have noted practically every house where a great man lived, and have told us the complete story of Piccadilly's origin and

early eventfulness. I wish at the outset to express my great and essential obligation to them and to other writers on the subject, more especially to Mr. Wheatley's *Round about Piccadilly and Pall Mall*, to which book my own is indebted for a great many facts and references. At this point, too, I wish to thank the Rev. W. J. Loftie for many useful hints in my work. But other writers, occupying a much wider field than mine, have had of necessity to confine themselves, for the most part, to telling us that in such and such houses lived such and such men, of whom such and such anecdotes are told. My local limitation enables me to attempt something more, and that is to recall in some fashion, if I may, the atmospheres that were about these men, and the tales told of them. I have space to elaborate and gossip, and so I propose to fill it.

I trust there is no immodesty in avowing this desire to add something, in a sense, to the work of men much superior to me in antiquarian knowledge. The rest of the book will show if the hope was foolish. But I would claim the antecedent excuse

of fairly wide and constant study in our social history since Piccadilly began to be built, of a great love for these associations, and—for this helps, I think—that my feet have trod its pavement most days for years whose number is beginning to depress me.

A local limitation of this sort may not be obviously useful. On a gossip, however, some limit must be put, and this one suggests a more variously interesting book than if I had chosen a wider space and a shorter period. Having taken it, I shall keep to it strictly. We shall walk up no streets on the right or left. The Albany, I think, one may take as a single house rather than a street: if that be an exception, it is the only one. And surely, if any part of any city deserves a book to itself, it is Piccadilly. We shall stand, the reader and I, before some house in the hours when the traffic is stilled, and I shall tell him of its history, of the men and women who dwelt there, and talked and loved and gambled and lived and died. And since to interest him I must interest myself, I shall follow the lines of my temperament and tastes rather than those of

completeness and impartiality: it is likely I shall be voluble about Byron and reticent about Macaulay. If the tale bores him, he can to bed without discourtesy.

G. S. STREET.

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CHAPTER I

A GENERAL VIEW

STANDING to-day in Piccadilly, in any ordinary hour of the traffic, or sitting in a room facing it with the window open, we remark that we cannot hear ourselves speak. So my book is in some measure an epitaph; for a place where we cannot hear ourselves speak is not likely to be favoured with fresh associations of the sort I commemorate. People will cease to live in it or to walk in it for pleasure. Even clubs will disappear from it, and hurry up side-streets in search of comparative quietude. The advocates of motor-omnibuses claim that the main thoroughfares must be given up to them, and people who value peace live elsewhere. Either that, or the machines must be made noiseless, which even their advocates do

not contemplate, or our nerves must become insensible. It is true that a hundred years ago, with the innumerable street cries and the freer voices of our ancestors—nay, even thirty years ago, when the cobble-stones were still used—the actual volume of sound was greater. But one can grow used to the continual rumble over stones, and cries which irritate the nerves do not deafen the ears; spasmodic machinery, suddenly grunting and shrieking, defeats and routs us finally. It is probable, then, that the melancholy prophecy is right, and that the true Piccadilly of history is fast dying. Let us leave it forthwith and go back to the day when that history was beginning. Let us stand at the top of St. James's Street, enter Mr. Wells's Time Machine, and go back to the year 1664.

I choose that year (let me say as we go) because then began the building of great houses in Piccadilly, and its entrance into the main current of our social history. The name, of course, is older; and here it behoves me, I suppose, to give an account of it—reluctantly, and overcoming a temptation to refer my readers to the authorities

and leave them alone in that company, for the facts are obscure, without being interesting.

In the early part of the seventeenth century, then, there was a house in this district —near the top of the Haymarket—known as Piccadilly Hall. It belonged to one Robert Baker, who made a will, dated April 14, 1623, in which he left two pounds ten shillings in money and ten shillings in bread to the poor of the parish, namely, that of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. In this will he speaks of a tenement in his own occupation, with its garden and cow-house, and land of the extent of two acres 'in two fields behind the Mews,' all enclosed with a brick wall, but without a name. In the entry of the charity in the accounts of the Overseers of the Poor, the donor is described as 'Robte Baeker of Pickadilley Hall,' and from this it is possible to infer that Robert Baker did not care for the name, which must in that case have been a nickname.

There was also a gaming-house hereabouts also known as Piccadilly, and otherwise as Shaver's Hall. That is, according to Mr. Wheatley, who thinks that Piccadilly Hall

was a private house, and that, the district having got the name of Piccadilly, the gaming-house was also so called. If, however, there is anything in Mr. Baker's omitting the name from his will, it seems probable that his house was in some way public, otherwise it would hardly have been given a nickname he regarded as derogatory. Be that as it may, I think it is clear that Shaver's Hall was not originally called Piccadilly, because George Garrard writes to Lord Conway, May 30, 1636—'Simone Austbiston's house is newly christened. It is called Shaver's Hall, as other neighbouring places thereabouts are nicknamed Tart Hall, Pickadell Hall'; and he goes on to say that the nickname was not derived from the builder's profession—he was barber to Lord Pembroke—but because Lord Dunbar lost £3000 at a sitting and was said to be shaved. Well, but in 1641 Lord Clarendon, then Mr. Hyde, went to 'a place called Piccadilly, which was a fair house for entertainment and gaming, with handsome gravel walks with shade, and where were an upper and lower bowling-green, whither very many of the nobility and gentry of the best quality

resorted both for exercise and conversation.' I opine that either this was a development of Baker's house, or that Shaver's Hall had come later to be confused with it and called Piccadilly, or that this was a house distinct from both. To it, at any rate, resorted Sir John Suckling—'natural, easy Suckling,' as Millamant calls him in *The Way of the World*—the poetical gallant who was famous for bowling and card-playing. 'He did use,' says Aubrey, 'to practise by himselfe a-bed, and then studyed the best way of managing the cards.' That has something of a sinister air, but in spite of it we find his sisters 'comeing to the Peccadillo bowling-green crying, for feare he should lose all their portions,' and the end of it all was suicide in Paris. Other gallants of less interest came to grief 'at Piccadilly,' but we need not linger over their fortunes.

Very early the name seems to have been extended to the district, for in the second edition of Gerarde's *Herbal*, published in 1633, we have 'The little wild Buglosse grows upon the drie ditche banks about Pickadilla, and almost everywhere.' It grew, that is, in the fields by the Western

Road, on the way to Reading—fields that in 1633 came up to Piccadilly Circus.

Yes; but still, why Piccadilly? Well, pickadil, says Thomas Blount in 1656, was 'the round hem, or the several divisions set together about the skirt of a garment, or other thing; also a kind of stiff collar made in fashion of a band. Hence, perhaps, that famous ordinary near St. James, called Pickadilly, took denomination; because it was then the outmost or skirt house of the suburbs that way. Others say that it took its name from this, that one Higgins, a tailor, who built it, got most of his estate by Pickadilles, which, in the last age, were much worn in England.' Higgins, says Mr. Wheatley, is a myth, and the former derivation the more probable. I confess it seems to me unlikely that a house should be called the skirt house because it was the outmost house, and it hardly amounts to a nickname, as Piccadilly seems to have been. On the other hand, without wishing to revive Higgins, I think it more or less natural to nickname a place of resort from an obtrusive piece of fashionable raiment, like a stiff collar, worn by its frequenters. I remember

that in my boyhood there was a popular satirical song called 'Captain Cuff,' from the habit of shooting out the cuffs alleged to mark military officers. In the same way, I can imagine a place frequented by gallants in remarkably stiff pickadilles coming to be called Pickadille or Pickadilly Hall. (In the impartial spelling of the seventeenth century it was written Pakadilla, Pickadilla, Peckadille, Pickedille, and even Piccadilly.) But it is not an attractive explanation.

More so is the idea that a Spaniard, coming over with Philip in Queen Mary's time, opened a gambling-house and called it —as with a shrug and a smile—his peccadillo. Unfortunately there is no more evidence for the Spaniard's existence than for Higgins's. That Aubrey, as we have seen, writes Peccadillo, and Evelyn on one occasion Piqudillo, does not signify much. But I cannot help thinking that some association in people's minds with peccadillo and its pleasant suggestions helped the rapid popularity and extension of the name. From being originally confined to what is now Coventry Street and the extreme east of Piccadilly—the part west to St. James's

Street being called Portugal Street in compliment to Catherine of Braganza—it was rapidly applied to the whole thoroughfare, as it was built over, to Hyde Park Corner. It is, indeed, a pleasant sound, Piccadilly, conveying to us the idea of a sunny spring morning and what lightness and gaiety there was in English life and manners.

And now, clearing our minds from these intricacies of origin—which are not much in my way to expound, but which I trust are tolerably clear in this brief statement—let us descend from our Time Machine, at the top of St. James's Street, in 1664.

Into a clearer air than now, although the sootiness of it was already a matter of complaint. As the sense of greater space and clarity refreshes our eyes, the noise of building and the cheerful voices of Caroline workmen strike our ears. For directly opposite us, where now is the bottom of Albemarle Street, my Lord Chancellor Clarendon is building him the great house whose sad fortune I shall talk to you about presently. And hard by this imposing edifice, with its projecting centre

and extremes, if we look eastwards we see Burlington House also a-building, less ornately than it was afterwards made, but clearly destined for a great man's occupation. If we walk to the east we shall notice some ordinary houses and shops of the period, notably one at the corner of Sackville Street, now Lincoln Bennett's, the hatters, where dwells Sir William Petty, great at the Admiralty and a friend of Mr. Pepys. If we like to go so far as the site of the Criterion, we shall find that Stuart London, too, thought it a good place for refreshment, and may enter the White Bear Inn, unless you be so nice about dates as to object (to forestall my critics) that the first mention of it is 1685.

In this eastern part of Piccadilly there are many people afoot, bustling and talking, sometimes kissing one another on meeting, all alert with that determination to enjoy life which marked the early years of the Restoration. I am sorely tempted to bid you mark yonder tall, dark man, with harsh features oddly contrasting with his good-humoured laugh as he talks with his companions, walking swiftly—bid you

mark him and uncover as he passes. It is the King, going without ceremony to look at his Chancellor's new house; the King to whose love of mixing with his people we owe it that St. James's Park has been free to the public since his day. The women are prettily dressed, and so for that are the men, though their dress has already declined from the punctilious elegance of Charles the First's time to overmuch lace and finery. The King was to try to change it for a plain Persian vest, but in clothes Englishmen have been always intractable. On the verge of the open country, however, as we are, we may well see a country gentleman or so coming into town in his manly and sensible country habit — his Devonshire kersey suit, his Dutch felt hat, his worsted stockings and his strong shoes.

We walk westwards again. If we had come a year later Berkeley House, which is now Devonshire House, would be building also, but to gain it we should have to pass the turnpike at the corner of Berkeley Street. Thenceforward is open country, the Western Road, without pavement and apt to be miry. The mud gets worse as we

pass what now is Brick Street, at the side of the Isthmian Club, where the Tyburn stream flows right across Piccadilly. But that we may not leave Piccadilly, we might follow the course of the stream up for a little way and understand why the pavement still rings hollow in Lansdowne Passage. There is a stone bridge over the Tyburn in Piccadilly, with an evil reputation. For the historian Norden had written in 1593, of 'Kinges-bridge, commonly called Stonebridge, near Hyde Park Corner, where I wish no true man to walke too late without good garde, unles he can make his partie good, as did Sir H. Knyvet, Knight, who valiantlye defended himselfe, there being assaulted, and slew the master theefe with his own handes.' If it happens to be May Day we might cross the bridge and go on to Hyde Park, where the people will be flocking from all parts near. Otherwise it is hardly worth our while, unless you would like to go to one of the many public-houses near Hyde Park Corner, built to assuage the outlying thirst of Knightsbridge.

Let us, then, move forward into the third decade of the next century. We shall find

the eastern quarter much the same, but many more houses and consequent bustle in the western. Devonshire House conceals its front from us—mercifully or not—by the unbroken brick wall we remember before the present Duke fetched his gates from Chiswick. It has lost what it had when it first was built—the most splendid and spacious gardens in London, stretching all over the site of Lansdowne House and Berkeley Square. Clarendon House is gone, and Bond Street, Albemarle Street, and Dover Street are come. The turnpike is gone from the end of Berkeley Street; it was taken to Hyde Park Corner in 1721. But our Stone Bridge over the Tyburn remains: in the hollow where the Isthmian Club is there was a flood in 1726, and carriages overset there. Piccadilly is not yet urban enough to be free from highwaymen, and of course it is dark at night; we had best walk down it in the morning. Just as we cross our bridge there is a yard for statuary, at the corner of Engine Street, now stupidly called Brick Street. We notice several more of these depressing places, where now are famous houses, exhibiting the contemporary

English taste in statues and most offensive to Mr. Horace Walpole. They are now happily gone to the decent obscurity of the Marylebone Road. But other houses than warehouses—and of course public-houses—there are in plenty, mostly mean, however, and devoted to lodgings. Houses enough to attract street-criers, each with his tune, more or less melodious; men and women offering to sell us everything and do almost anything for us—apple-women, bandbox men, bellows-menders, heaven knows what. With luck we shall see a tumbler and a dancing-girl, and may listen to a ballad-singer. We may get a speedy cure for agues of all sorts from William Denman at 'The Golden Ball, near Hyde Park Corner, and nowhere else,' as an advertisement tells us; and, by the way, as late as 1834 I have noticed in *Boyle's Guide* that Piccadilly was a great place for surgeons. As we walk thither we may see all kinds of people: powdered and patched ladies in sedan-chairs, and men too in them, powdered also and elaborately dressed, for the careless fashion set by Fox (who had been a Macaroni) and his friends is still some fifty years off. We

may see the earliest umbrellas carried abroad—perhaps the Duchess of Bedford with a black holding one over her, as she is seen in a print of 1730.

But let us speed our machine some forty years onwards and come at length to the true glory of Piccadilly. It is a comely street now, indeed. The statuaries have disappeared, and in their place stand many fair houses, much as we know them now—Coventry House, which is now the St. James's Club; and Egremont House, which became Cholmondeley House, and Cambridge House for George the Third's son, and is now the Naval and Military or 'In-and-Out' Club, and many another. They look over the slope down the Green Park, with no other side of the street to block the view, only the 'sulky side'—'Sulky Terrace' as the late Admiral Macdonald called it—where one might stroll when one would not be greeted. In the Green Park itself, opposite Dover Street, stands the Ranger's Lodge, which is gone. Humbler houses, too, there are still, like the lodging-house whither Fielding's Squire Western was sent by the landlord of 'The Pillars of Hercules'

at Hyde Park Corner — 'The Pillars of Hercules,' where Sheridan went when he was interrupted in his duel with Captain Mathews over the beautiful Miss Linley.

From this time onwards Piccadilly becomes a centre, and by far the fairest, of our articulate history. Great names, greatly suggestive to all who care for that history, it may claim for its own, dotted up and down it, by right of housing them; and if we add the men and women who for clubs or their friends' houses frequented it, there is hardly a great name that is absent. In my pages only those who had an essential connection with Piccadilly may appear, but they may serve the purpose of the least continent gossip.

> 'A Piccadilly Beauty
> Went out on canvassing duty,'

in 1780, for Charles Fox — Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, the most admired and perhaps the best-loved woman of her time. She goes out from Devonshire House; and we, strolling down Piccadilly, pass Fanny Burney's lodgings at 89, and go on to the Duke of Queensberry's house at 138.

We might wait twenty years or more for our stroll back and still 'old Q.' is at 138—a very old man leering on his balcony; and we may see Scott going into his friends the Dumergues' house, 96 (it was 15 Piccadilly, West); and, three doors off, Nelson's wonderful Emma coming out of her husband Sir William Hamilton's. Yet a few years and Brummell, finally 'dished,' is leaving Watier's famous club at 81, or Lady Byron is leaving, for good or evil, the same house where 'old Q.' died. Or we turn our machine another half-century, and Palmerston is living at Cambridge House, and the Ashburtons at Bath House are entertaining Tennyson and Thomas Carlyle, and—but it is time to be more particularly local and to take the houses in detail.

CHAPTER II

CONTRASTED FATES: CLARENDON HOUSE AND DEVONSHIRE HOUSE

THREE years or less from its building Clarendon House was a monument of fallen greatness. Within twenty years it was gone for ever. Devonshire House, built a year later, has been for two hundred years the home of one of the very few most prosperous families in England, and shelters still perhaps the most distinguished head of that family. For eighteen years they stood side by side. I do not know that there is any moral in particular to be drawn from the circumstance, unless that it is safer to go slowly, but the contrast must needs arrest the eye of a moralist.

The building of Clarendon House in itself seemed to show a man whose head was turned by high position. In 1664 Hyde

was at the summit of his power, Lord Chancellor of England, and still overawing his sovereign. His daughter was wife to the heir-apparent. But Charles was already wearying of this tutelage, and anxious to escape from it; and two great shadows were on their way, the arrival of an unhappy war and the non-arrival of a child to the Queen, which were to darken the Chancellor's head in the eyes of the people. 'He has married his daughter to the Duke of York, and looks to be grandfather of kings, curse him,' said the people.

However, in 1664, Charles granted him a large tract of land eastwards to Swallow Street, which now is, and uncertainly but generously, westwards; and later, the City of London gave him (practically) a lease of the Conduit Mead, covered now by New Bond Street, Brook Street, and so forth. He chose the spot at the top of St. James's Street, fronting St. James's Palace, which to the envious this upstart palace might seem to rival, and began building with the stones intended to repair old St. Paul's—in itself a tactless proceeding. The admiring Pepys and the complimentary Evelyn

recorded the erection in diaries and letters. Evelyn wrote to Lord Cornbury, Clarendon's son, a most eloquent panegyric on it, and pronounced it 'the first palace in England, deserving all I have said of it, and a better encomiast,' and ended with the pious wish that when Clarendon 'shall have passed to that upper building not made with hands,' his posterity ('as you, my Lord') might inherit the palace—and the rest of his greatness. Alas for the builder, so soon to be ruined, and his posterity to be impoverished!

In 1667 the deluge began. The Dutch sailed up to Gravesend, and the mob broke the windows of Clarendon House. They called it Holland House, suggesting bribes from the Dutch; Dunkirk House, with the idea that Clarendon was bribed to sell Dunkirk; and Tangier Hall, because they had no use for Tangier, which he had acquired for England. A most unpopular edifice. 'They have cut down the trees before his house,' writes Pepys, 'and broke his windows; and a gibbet either set up before or painted upon his gate, and these words writ: "Three sights to be seen—Dunkirke, Tangier, and a barren Queen."'

This last accusation, as Mr. Wheatley says, was unjust, because Clarendon could not help it, had even opposed the marriage with Catherine of Braganza. But the mob was not alone in giving him the blame of the unlucky non-result. The Court did so too, and Rochester, challenged by the King to find a rhyme to Lisbon, fired off:

> 'Here's health to Kate,
> Our Sovereign's mate,
> Of the royal house of Lisbon:
> But the devil take Hyde,
> And the Bishop beside,
> Who made her bone of his bone.'

An impromptu, let us hope, for then the rhyme is brilliant.

Two months later, Sir William Morrice was sent to the fine new house to demand the Great Seal from its owner.

So he sat in his great house, with its wings and its turret in the middle, and its low wall running along Piccadilly, and its fine gates; sat there and wondered how long he might sit there still. The workmen were not yet out of the place altogether, and I dare say Clarendon guessed with what gibes they were building for him. Evelyn visited

him in December, and found him 'in his garden, at his new-built palace, sitting in his gowt wheel-chayre, and seeing the gates setting up towards the north and the fields. He looked and spoke very disconsolately.' The picture is pathetic enough, for if Clarendon fell short of being a great man, he was at least a zealous and strenuous man; he had shared his master's exile, and had seen the cause of his master triumph, only himself to fall. He was impeached for high treason, and wrote humbly to Charles, 'I do upon my knees beg your pardon for any over-bold or saucy expressions I have used to you . . . a natural disease in old servants who have received too much countenance.' For a sensualist Charles was not hard-hearted, but Clarendon had gone too far and too long against his comfort, and he let his old servant's enemies have their way.

Clarendon fled to Calais, to die in exile seven years later, and pious versifiers took care to dwell on the affair of those unlucky stones. 'God,' wrote one,

> 'God will revenge, too, for the stones he took
> From aged Paul's to make a nest for rooks.'

The house was leased by his sons, Cornbury

and Lawrence Hyde—who was a favourite and companion of Charles—to the Duke of Ormonde. There, again, is a figure sorrowful in a way, though not disastrous. At the Court of Charles the Second Ormonde was out of date. He was a great noble—too great, unless indeed he had overtly combated the Government—to be sent the way of Clarendon, a new man; and Charles himself never failed in respect to this old and potent servant of his father. It is recorded that Buckingham once asked him whether the Duke of Ormonde had lost his favour or he the Duke's, since it was the King who was embarrassed when they met. But this was a parvenu Court. His ancient nobility fatigued the King, and he set about him new people, male and female, who could amuse him. The Duke of Ormonde must have chafed at the upstarts and foreigners who were more powerful than he, and must have known that there was something ironical in their deference to him; that his stateliness and older fashion were ridiculed behind his back. It was fated that no happy man should be master in Clarendon House.

It was while he lived there that a most extraordinary outrage was done on him, and that perhaps the most extraordinary scene that ever happened in Piccadilly took place; it was finished there, if it was begun in St. James's Street, and so comes scrupulously into my pages.

In the year 1670, less than two centuries and a half ago, this powerful noble, driving up St. James's Street towards his house fronting it, in his coach with six footmen attending him, was set upon by ruffians, seized and hurried along Piccadilly towards Tyburn, where they proposed to hang him.

I am tempted to digress into the history of Colonel Blood, that most melodramatic villain with the most convenient name—a history which no romancer would have dared to invent. It would colour my quiet pages to relate how he stole the crown from the Tower, and very nearly got off with it, and other surprising feats. But it is not in the bond, and the reader may go to no more recondite a source than Scott's notes to his *Peveril of the Peak*, and the adventure I may tell is startling enough.

The Duke of Ormonde had been dining

in the City, in attendance on the Prince of Orange, then in England, and was returning home. It was a dark night. He always took six footmen abroad with him, but did not allow their weight on his coach, having spikes on it to prevent their clambering up; they went on either side of the street. Blood's ruffians contrived to stop the footmen, while Blood and his son dragged the Duke from the coach.

And now, if Blood had been content with simple murder he might have done it. But the Duke was his old enemy; he had attributed to Ormonde the Act of Settlement in England of 1663 which had inconvenienced Lieutenant Blood, as he was then, and by a plot had nearly captured Dublin Castle, and Ormonde, the Lord Lieutenant of the time, within it. Like a proper villain of melodrama, Blood never *quite* succeeded in his fell purposes. So now his artist villainy prompted a finer revenge than mere stabbing. He would hang the Duke at Tyburn. They forced him on horseback, and buckled him to one of the ruffians, and then Blood rode off, saying he would tie a rope to the gallows. The

coachman, meanwhile, drove on to Clarendon House and gave the alarm, telling the porter—all this is from Thomas Carte, who wrote a history of Ormonde,—'that the Duke had been seized by two men who had carried him down Pickadilly.'

Blood's swagger undid him. For the Duke, though sixty, which was old age in those days, was still a man of his hands, and struggled valiantly, so that the ruffian in front of him made but slow progress. They had got a good way past Devonshire House, however, on the road between the fields towards Knightsbridge, when the Duke cleverly got his foot under the ruffian's and fell with him into the mud. By now the neighbourhood was alarmed, and rescue was arriving, and the ruffian made off, so that Blood coming impatiently back from Tyburn to meet his victim, found his followers in flight. The Duke, exhausted, had to be carried home to Clarendon House, and lay ill there for some days. I fear Piccadilly is no pleasant haunting-place for his ghost.

No happy person ever possessed Clarendon House. It was sold, after Clarendon's death, to the young Duke of Albemarle—

the second, Monk's son—and he was a spendthrift and a drunkard. (Clarges Street, by the way, is called after his uncle, Sir Thomas.) He went out to Jamaica to seek a sunken Spanish galleon, found his galleon, but lived not to enjoy the gold. His widow was a madwoman, whose illusion, that she should marry the Grand Turk, made the fortune of the first Duke of Montagu; but her history belongs not to Piccadilly.

The Duke of Albemarle sold Clarendon House, which he had called Albemarle House, to a 'little syndicate'—as we now affectionately call such bodies—which gave £35,000 for the house and the ground about it. The syndicate seems to have known its business, since Evelyn tells us that it recovered this money by the sale of the old materials alone. Its leading spirit was Sir Thomas Bond, of Peckham.

So the ill-fated house was pulled down, and four new streets—Dover, Albemarle, Bond, and Stafford—were built on its site; the name of one of the earliest of those speculators who are the pride of our country immortalised among them. It was being

pulled down when Evelyn drove by with Lord Clarendon, the Chancellor's son, and tactfully, as he tells us, turned his head the other way. Evelyn, too, moralises very beautifully over the demolition. 'See,' says he, and so say I, 'the vicissitudes of earthly things!'

Turn we to a happier theme. Devonshire House was at first Berkeley House, built in 1665 for Lord Berkeley of Stratton, who has left both these names to the streets on either side. With him I need not linger, nor do more than mention the fact that Queen Anne lived here in 1695.

The Cavendishes began their long possession in 1697 with William, the first Duke of Devonshire.

There seems ever to have been a sort of dignified reticence about this family, which greatly impresses me as a man, but rather baffles me as a scribbler.

'The roaring generations flit and fade,'

and there is ever a Devonshire filling his eminent position, calm, retiring, imperturbable, and never an amusing thing to tell of any one of them. The first Duke, to be

sure, is said by Horace Walpole to have been 'a patriot among the men, a Corydon among the ladies,' and a lady complimented him in a poem as one

'Whose soft commanding looks our breasts assailed,'

but those dashing qualities resulted in no history we can chuckle over now. He did indeed cause a public scandal, but it was in a curiously lugubrious manner. Being a very religious man—as Major Pendennis said of his friend who played piquet all day except on Sundays—the Duke insisted on putting up a monument in a church to the memory of his mistress, Miss Anne Campion, the singer. The public was indignant, and Pope's ready lash fell on the Duke, who was dead by then, and probably would not have paid much attention had he been alive.

The third Duke had the pleasure of rebuilding the house, which was destroyed by fire in 1733, after a design by William Kent. Many severe criticisms have been passed on it, and ironical compliments on the wall which till lately hid it. Mr. Max Beerbohm once wrote an eloquent essay protesting against the insertion of the gates

in the wall, but his reason, I think, was that the unbroken brick conveyed an agreeable air of mystery. For my part, the ugliness of Devonshire House, if it is ugly, does not displease me. Plainness and severity of design suit the climate, the atmosphere, the tone and temperament generally, of London. If architecture, as Goethe said, is as frozen music, then that of London should be solemn marches and simple airs, not roulardes and fandangoes. Devonshire House is well enough.

And so, I do not doubt, were the third Duke and the fourth; but there is nothing to say of them.

But the fifth Duke has a lustre about him time cannot dim, for he married Lady Georgiana Spencer.

I wonder no one as yet has written a 'Book of Duchesses.' The very title would make it popular, and it might really be full of the most excellent differences. To my mind, the most interesting figure in it would not be Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire. Force of character, strength of will, and single-hearted selfishness of purpose

exalt the great Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, beyond all other duchesses. I sometimes fancy that she, with her harsh common sense and her overbearing ways, created that popular tradition of a duchess which humorists and comedies have fixed in the public mind. But most fascinating of duchesses to imagine—far more so than any of those jolly but a little coarse wantons who were made duchesses by Charles the Second—Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, beyond question was.

Lineally descended from the great duchess I have named, she is said to have been like her, but assuredly must have had a kindness and softness in her face which the other lacked. Faultlessly beautiful she was not, though that 'her hair was not without a tinge of red,' as Sir Nathaniel Wraxall remarked, would not now prevent our thinking her so. But with her freshness and grace, her sensitive, intelligent features, we can picture the outward setting as fit enough for the soul that led and sweetened and held the hearts of that great aristocratic society.

And what a society it was! Many writers, this one among the least of them,



Her Grace the Duchess of Devonshire

have tried to express it, but none has quite succeeded. A society, coherent, small, as it were a large family, of unquestioned authority and power, and therefore free from the nervous assertiveness which marks aristocracies apparent but unreal; punctilious in a way, but to our conception free-spoken to the last degree; sure of itself, and therefore not superficially exclusive, as indeed the best of English society has seldom been; cultivated sometimes, and always wishing to be thought so, which is at least a better mood than the pride of ignorance so common in England now; amorous, adventurous, free-living, and with the humour ever running to eccentricity, which till lately was always characteristic of our people, 'high or low'—can any one deny the charm of such a society? It had the vices, I know, which have characterised leisure and abundance in every age. It gambled persistently, and not infrequently broke its marriage vows. Indeed, one may regret that certain preachers of our day were not alive then for a proper field for their abilities. The 'smart set' they castigate now is a trivial bogey. Our society is an

incoherent mass split up into coteries, and possibly of one coterie or another it may be said with truth that it practises the vices named as a regular habit. But not—and this is the important point—a coterie with power and prestige. Our society is specialised, and the people with political influence are hard-working, innocently recreating folk. What the unimportant 'smart' people do may matter to themselves, but is not the national concern the preachers would have it. The evils of our community are not to be found in such matters—they are evils beside which these are trumpery.

In this eighteenth century it was otherwise. It was the men ruling the country, or at least having its ear, who were the gamblers and libertines. The Duke of Grafton and Lord Sandwich were important politicians; Charles Fox was the most reckless prodigal of his age. Even matched with our own delinquents, not with our statesmen, these sinners were dreadful. Two years ago there was a great scandal in London because a young man lost ten thousand pounds at a club, playing *écarté*; but when Fox and FitzPatrick held their

faro-bank at Brooks's—the now so impressively respectable Brooks's—such losses were daily or nightly events.

Ah, well! I am a socialist, and am far from setting up this old English society as an ideal state of things. Yet it was not in itself more harmful than many a ring of respectable plutocrats now, and that it had an agreeable tone—an ironical, tolerant, life-loving tone—all its letters show, not only those of intellectual connoisseurs of life like Horace Walpole, but those of all the casual sporting men and women who wrote to George Selwyn.

It was, of course, the Whig branch of it over which her Grace of Devonshire presided, a more charming hostess, one imagines, than a little later Whig society found in the imperious Lady Holland. One of her closest intimates was Charles Fox himself, and that alliance must have been pleasant indeed to watch—Charles with his heavy frame and his big-featured, swarthy face, lit up with that indescribably gay twinkle of fun and good temper his best portrait shows us; and she, blonde and arch and eager—what would not one give to listen to them?

She came of a clever and spirited family. Her cousin and friend was the Lady Diana who was divorced by the second Lord Bolingbroke, the 'Bully' of the Selwyn letters, and married Topham Beauclerk, Dr. Johnson's strangely chosen companion—the Lady Diana who was so clever at drawing Cupids. She was loved at home, and there is a touching anecdote told by Wraxall of her sister Lady Bessborough's grief for her death. So we picture her, gay, clever, a little spoiled perhaps, marrying at seventeen the fifth Duke of Devonshire. 'She is a lovely girl,' wrote Horace Walpole, 'natural and full of grace; he, the first match in England.'

And what was he besides? Calm—that is the note struck in the accounts of him beyond all others. 'A nobleman,' Wraxall describes him, 'whose constitutional apathy formed his distinguishing characteristic. His figure was tall and manly, though not animated or graceful; his manners always calm and unruffled. He seemed to be incapable of any strong emotion, and destitute of all energy or activity of mind.' This apathy, it would seem, did not yield to the charms of conversation in Devonshire House;

the Duke, to rouse himself, had to repair to Brooks's and play at whist or faro. It is agreeable to know, however, that he 'possessed a highly improved understanding,' and was regarded as an infallible referee at Brooks's when there was any dispute about passages in the Roman poets or historians. (What place in our day combines gambling with discussions on the Roman poets?) He possessed, also, 'the hereditary probity characteristic of the family of Cavendish,' which perhaps was made a little easier by the more than comfortable circumstances also characteristic of that family. George the Fourth passed a severe judgment on him in his famous criticism of the way in which people had come forward to be invested with the Garter, saying that 'the Duke of Devonshire advanced up to the Sovereign with his phlegmatic, cold, awkward air, like a clown.' We may as well take the more complimentary view, and believe that he was simply calm. But even so, it seems a figure of somewhat excessive calmness, and it is almost a relief to learn that beneath all this apathy he was not 'insensible to the seduction of female charms.'

It might be supposed that a woman so active and emotional as his Duchess would not be happily joined to a man normally so unruffled, and roused only by cards and female charms, which, unfortunately, it seems were not necessarily those of his wife, and we might look for scandal. Happily, however, these contrasting temperaments not infrequently agree well enough, and it is not on record that the Duke's calm was unpleasantly ruffled by his wife. That she was wild and inclined to be dissipated is true. There is a letter from Lady Sarah Bunbury, in which the writer laments the Duchess's preposterous hours, but there is no hint in it of the mistake into which Lady Sarah herself, alas! was soon to fall. She played cards, of course, like all her world; but the play does not seem to have been serious enough to keep the Duke at home, or perhaps he preferred masculine methods at the card-table. Also, if we may believe the writer of a *Second Letter to the Duchess of Devonshire*, a pamphlet which the curious will find in the British Museum, she sometimes made undesirable acquaintances. It must have been

agreeable to have such kind and intimate things printed and published about one as this: 'I am disposed to think, nay, I have very substantial reasons for thinking, that your Grace places an unreserved confidence in persons whom the Duke of Devonshire does not approve, and from whom Lady Spencer has in vain endeavoured to separate you.' But I think we need gather only that even this Duchess of Devonshire did not please everybody. While the curious, by the way, are in the British Museum, they might ask also for a poem of the period, called 'The Duchess of Devonshire's Cow,' and admire the appalling insipidity from which the print of no age is free.

I trust the censor quoted above did not allude to Dr. Johnson. 'I have seen the Duchess of Devonshire,' writes Wraxall again, 'then in the first bloom of youth, hanging on the sentences that fell from Johnson's lips, and contending for the nearest place to his chair.' Is there any man of letters on whose sentences duchesses hang now? If there be, I doubt he is not so sound as Dr. Johnson. Let us remember, when we think of this lady and her friends,

that their homage to genius was not a mere fashion; that they read and understood and thought; it is a quality which we may surely set against much else that they did unwisely. As the English aristocracy has been gradually commercialised, its sport has been continued with enthusiasm, but its culture has sadly fallen away. As for vices, they were never very difficult to learn. It is a pleasant side to this duchess, who had 'far more of manner, politeness, and gentle quiet' than Fanny Burney had expected in so dashing a great lady.

Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, is chiefly remembered now as the prototype of lady canvassers, for her exertions in behalf of Charles Fox in the Westminster election of 1784. When 'the Piccadilly Beauty' had done her work,

> 'The butchers and the bakers,
> The grocers, undertakers,
> The milliners and toymen,
> All vote for Carlo Khan.'

She entered, the Cornwallis Correspondence tells us, 'some of the most blackguard houses in the Long Acre,' and as we all know—but I am not afraid of being hackneyed—bought

Steel the butcher's vote with a kiss. She had then one of the finest compliments ever paid a woman, when an Irish mechanic exclaimed, 'I could light my pipe at her eyes!' Which, madam, would you like best: that, or the famous compliment which Steele—not the butcher, but Dick Steele—paid another woman? Would you rather a pipe could be lit at your eyes, or that to love you were a liberal education? I wonder.

Four years earlier, in the Gordon Riots, she had to flee from Devonshire House to Lord Clement's in Berkeley Square, where she slept in the drawing-room on a sofa or small tent-bed.

She died in 1806, and Charles Fox said they had lost the kindest heart in England. There is nothing, I think, to be added about the calm Duke, except that he married again—the Elizabeth, Duchess of Devonshire, about whose portrait by Gainsborough there was a fuss some years ago. She let Byron his house in Piccadilly, and I regret to say had some difficulty in getting the rent paid.

So Clarendon House, with nothing to its memory but the story of a fall, is gone; and

Devonshire House, the scene of a thousand great festivals, the home of important dukes in unfailing line, stands still, lordly and prosperous. Yet I doubt if any ghost but one comes from its gates and haunts Piccadilly with an interest for us so arresting as that of the beaten old statesman, whom we may picture in some solitary night sitting somewhere in Albemarle Street, where his garden was, in his 'gowt wheel-chair,' looking disconsolately.

Which of those calm, unruffled dukes appeals to us now? They had character, for the most part, to stand well with their contemporaries, and sense not to fling away the gifts which by accident of birth were theirs. A worthy and impressive line, it cannot fascinate our imagination. One gracious and fair ghost comes out of Devonshire House and rewards our homage with a smile. I am sure if she goes his way, and sees poor Clarendon in his wheel-chair, she says something kind to him.

CHAPTER III

ANOTHER CONTRAST OF NEIGHBOURS: 81 AND 82

I WOULD not weary the reader with contrasts, but when side by side, with only the width of Bolton Street between them, there stand two houses in Piccadilly, of which one is most famous as a ruinous gambling club, and the other as a scene of blameless lionising, with Thomas Carlyle for the chief king of beasts—why, then, I cannot help myself.

Captain Gronow, whose reminiscences no lover of gossip about great names and no student of strange differences in manners should miss reading, gives the following account of Watier's Club. He says that some members of White's and Brooks's were dining with the Prince Regent, and were

asked by him what sort of dinners they got at their clubs. They grumbled, of course, as members of clubs are wont to grumble, and Sir Thomas Stepney told him that their dinners were always the same: 'the eternal joints, or beefsteaks, the boiled fowl with oyster sauce, and an apple tart—this is what we have, sir, at our clubs, and very monotonous fare it is.' The Prince, 'without further remark,' continues Gronow—no doubt he was too deeply moved to speak—'rang the bell for his cook, Wattier, and in the presence of those who dined at the royal table, asked him whether he would take a house and organise a dinner club. Wattier assented, and named Madison, the Prince's page, manager, and Labourie, the cook, from the royal kitchen.' (The usual accounts, by the way, speak of Watier's Club as one originally established, in 1807, by Lord Headford and other young men, for musical concerts. But it can hardly have been 'Watier's' before the advent of the Prince's cook.)

Hence the famous Watier's Club, where the dinners were exquisite—'the best Parisian cooks could not beat Labourie'—and



Beau Brummell

where Captain Gronow had the happiness of frequently seeing his Royal Highness the Duke of York. And hence, alas! many tears, for the play was terrible, and in a few years had ruined most of the members, among them the prince of all dandies.

George Brummell was made perpetual president of the club. One cannot say that justice has never been done to Brummell—is there not Barbey d'Aurevilly's classic, *Du Dandysme et de Georges Brummell?*—but in English, at least, he has more often been written about in a slighting manner, which seems to me to show little judgment of character. It is absurd to suppose that Brummell, whose grandfather let lodgings in Bury Street, achieved his position in the English society of that time by foppery and impudence. It is possible that to strive and care for such a position is hardly the mark of a great mind; that is another question; the point is that it was most difficult to achieve, and that Brummell achieved it. True, that the best of English society has seldom been superficially exclusive, but it did not in the early nineteenth century open

its doors to men of 'no birth' merely because they knocked at them in smart clothes. Also, it is one thing to dine with or visit a society, and another to lay down laws for it and be really intimate with its governing members. Even after Brummell had been cut by the Regent, he continued to stay with his brother the Duke of York at Oatlands, and was the friend of the Duchess till her death. The Duchess of Devonshire, Georgiana herself, Erskine, Sheridan, Fitz-Patrick (Charles Fox's greatest friend), William Lamb, afterwards the Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, and Byron all wrote verses for Brummell's album—which is quite a different thing from his writing in theirs. Beyond doubt he was a popular leader of the society he lived in. He did not achieve this by foppery. Brummell's foppery, indeed, consisted merely in a quite artistic effort to improve the ugly dress of his time, and in seeking something of grace and elegance in the common things men used. The Regent was his enthusiastic pupil in these matters, and was for ever trying his bulky person in coats designed by Mr. Brummell and executed by Mr.

Weston of Old Bond Street, the artist whom Mr. Brummell favoured. Alas! As the delightful Captain tells us, 'The hours of meditative agony which each dedicated to the odious fashions of the day have left no monument save the coloured caricatures in which these illustrious persons have appeared.' But Brummell's ideal of dress was never extravagant, rather was it a sort of finished simplicity—'exquisite propriety' was Byron's phrase for it—and his leading maxim, 'fresh linen and plenty of it,' might be commended to the sternest of rationalists.

Nor did he gain his position by impudence. Impudent he was on occasion, no doubt, with that sort of comical self-exaggeration, or emphasis of the foibles accredited to him, which has been the gay humour characteristic of other poseurs on the surface—Irishmen, as a rule, and I cannot help thinking that nobody who had not Irish blood in him could push folly with a serious face as did Brummell now and then. Only a man's enemies, or too intensely Saxon people, call that kind of humour effrontery. As for a different sort of impudence, the sort of the famous 'Who 's your fat friend?' given the

circumstances, I call that courage and a kind of practical wit.

Brummell was handsome—he broke his nose, being thrown from his horse, at Brighton, while his regiment, the 10th Hussars, was being reviewed, but that did not signify—handsome and well-made, and with an address that commended him to women. At Eton he was an Admirable Crichton—apparently both a wet bob and a dry bob—'the best scholar, the best boatman, the best cricketer,' and laid there the foundation of his social success. He was a man of taste in other things than dress: could sing and draw, dance beautifully, and write agreeable verses. Recorded jokes of another age are always stupid, and Brummell's are no exception. Real wit that endures, cut and dried, is rare. I am happy to have known some of the wittiest people of my time, and don't remember half a dozen jokes that were worth writing down: it is always the manner, the humour of the occasion, the right touch of folly, that makes one's merriment. It is little against the wit of another age that we, who were not there, cannot laugh at it, and it is certain that

George Brummell had the essentials of good company.

Beyond all that, however, I think we must credit him with some genuine force of character, and a sense of perspective and values which kept his head steady where another's might have been easily turned. I grant the triviality of the ambition to which these qualities were applied. Yet I cannot imagine Brummell as the ordinary aspiring snob, rather would I say that he collected dukes and duchesses as he collected snuff-boxes—and there 's a difference. Certainly he had character. Lady Hester Stanhope—she who led that strange life in the East—a woman of independent judgment, and the last person to be influenced by fashion and foppery, wrote that 'the man was no fool,' and 'I should like to see him again.'

Brummell died mad, as we know, and it is likely that his affliction was coming on him before his ruin in London. The recklessness of his latter course there looks like it, and it is quite possible that when his saner balance was gone the gay mock-assertiveness became bare impudence, and

the wit buffoonery. He was ruined at Watier's, in the same year that saw Byron's voluntary but inevitable banishment. Scrope Davies, the buck and 'man about town,' who was Byron's intimate, had this letter from him at the last. 'My dear Scrope, lend me two hundred pounds; the banks are shut, and all my money is in the three per cents. It shall be repaid to-morrow morning.—Yours, George Brummell.' And Scrope Davies answered: 'My dear George, 'tis very unfortunate, but all my money is in the three per cents.—Yours, S. Davies.' One is disposed to like Scrope Davies because he stuck to Byron, with Hobhouse, Lady Jersey, and very few more, in the time of the scandal, but the heartlessness of that note offends taste as much as sentiment, and one remembers that even in Byron's case many stories of absurdities came from this same Scrope Davies.

The two most famous stories about Brummell illustrate the uncertainty of such traditions. There is that about his telling the Regent to ring the bell, and the Prince's doing so and ordering his guest's carriage. He denied it, and Jesse in his *Life* gives the

explanation, that being asked at Carlton House by the Prince to ring the bell, and being deep in talk with Lord Moira at the moment, he said without thinking, 'Your Royal Highness is close to it,' whereupon the easily enraged Prince rang the bell and ordered Brummell's carriage, but was placated by Lord Moira. Captain Gronow, however, gives a different story, which was told him by Sir Arthur Upton, present at the time. The Regent heard that Brummell had won £20,000 from George Drummond —a partner in the famous bank, and turned out for this exploit — playing whist at White's, and, characteristically impressed, asked the Beau to dinner. They had quarrelled, but Brummell, I suppose, who was certainly the better gentleman of the two, thought it a reconciliation and went. The Prince's bad blood and bad breeding— I call his great champion Mr. Beerbohm's attention to these phrases, which are mine, not Gronow's—came out in full force : he took advantage of Brummell's growing a little gay with wine to say to the Duke of York, 'I think we had better order Mr. Brummell's carriage before he gets drunk.'

Both stories, of course, may be true. As for the 'fat friend' anecdote, Jesse says the Prince was walking with Lord Moira and Brummell with Alvanley; but Gronow makes the scene a ball and the Prince's companion Lady Worcester, in which case 'Prinney's' wrath is the more intelligible.

Poor Brummell! We get a last vivid glimpse of him at Calais in 1830 in the memoirs of Charles Greville, who must have met him often at Oatlands. 'I found him in his old lodging, dressing: some pretty pieces of old furniture in the room, an entire toilet of silver, and a large green macaw perched on the back of a tattered silk chair with faded gilding,' and he adds in a phrase of rare eloquence, 'full of gaiety, impudence, and misery.' He was to sink lower, in the ten years left of his existence, to a debtor's prison at Caen, and its asylum of the *Bon Sauveur*. God rest him! but if his ghost walks he shakes his fist at 81 Piccadilly.

It is time that we returned there. Byron was a member, as he tells us in his 'detached thoughts.' 'I liked the Dandies; they were

always very civil to me. . . . I knew them all more or less, and they made me a member of Watier's (a superb Club at that time), being, I take it, the only literary man (except two others, both men of the world, M. and S.) in it.' He means Thomas Moore and William Spencer, and the passage is a little odd, since to a 'literary man,' *quà* that, Watier's could hardly have been a desirable resort. Byron, however, did not play then, or not to any extent. He had given it up since cards replaced dice, and macao was the game at Watier's. 'I was very fond of it when young, that is to say, of "Hazard"; for I hate all *card* games, even Faro. When Macco (or whatever they spell it) was introduced, I gave up the whole thing; for I loved and missed the *rattle* and *dash* of the box and dice, and the glorious uncertainty, not only of good luck or bad luck, but of *any luck at all*, as one had sometimes to throw *often* to decide at all. . . . Since one and twenty years of age, I played but little, and then never above a hundred or two, or three,' which would not have gone far at Watier's.

So it was not all gambling there; some

men, no doubt, went for the good eating as some went in later years to Crockford's. We hear also of a masquerade given by Watier's to the Duke of Wellington and the conquering sovereigns — 'Wellington and Co.' is Byron's irreverent phrase—in 1814. There was a curious representation of this masquerade given at Drury Lane a year later, when some of the Drury Lane Committee—it was run something as Covent Garden is now—Byron included, went on the stage among the supers.

Watier's came to an end in 1819; apparently the members had succeeded in ruining each other. But the association of gambling with 81 Piccadilly was not over, and one great name yet illustrates the house. That is none other than Crockford himself. It is not quite certain, but I believe is almost so, that among other hells in which this financial genius was interested, *en route* from the fish-shop where his fortunes began to the most famous of all English gambling places in St. James's Street, was one held at 81 Piccadilly. It was a 'French hazard' bank, and the partners cleared £200,000. The use of false dice was charged

against them; indeed actual false dice, said to have been used at 81, were exhibited later in Bond Street.

So much for 81 Piccadilly. I know not who lives there now, but I trust that in honour of Watier's an occasional game of cards is played on the premises.

We cross from the east to the west side of Bolton Street, and come to 82, which was and is Bath House. The original house was built by the Earl of Bath, William Pulteney, the statesman of George the Second's time, Sir Robert Walpole's opponent. His is not a personality of much interest to me, but I am glad he lived in Piccadilly, because by virtue of a quarrel he gives me fair ground to linger for one brief moment over an old study of mine, John, Lord Hervey. Besides, they fought their duel in the Green Park opposite.

John, Lord Hervey—Baron Hervey of Ickworth, the second title of Lord Bristol, whose eldest son he was, not Lord John Hervey, as inaccurate writers have called him—has left us some of the best memoirs in the language. You must skip the details

of politics no longer alive for us, but you have left one of the most real and living pictures of a Court and society round it ever penned. He was most intimately of the world he shows us, but by gift of intellect and an ironical temperament could stand apart and take a view of it. Something of a pessimist and with a native scorn of humanity, he offended the sentiment of Thackeray. 'There is John Hervey, with his deadly smile and ghastly, painted face—I hate him.' I cannot hate people who interest and amuse me so much, and I doubt if he was hateful. A man intellectually and personally fastidious in a coarse age is sure to be accused of effeminacy. Hervey married a famous beauty, Molly Lepel, and fought his duel—though he thought it a silly custom—like a man; and as for painting his face, he did it to save his friends the horror of the intense white illness had painted it first. Truly a remarkable family, those eighteenth-century Herveys. 'God made men, women, and Herveys,' as Lady Townshend said. One of them was said by rumour to be the real father of Horace Walpole, another was the first husband of the

bigamous Duchess of Kingston—there were giants of scandal in those days!—and another was the Tom Hervey who printed rude advertisements about his wife, but was so beloved by Dr. Johnson that 'if you called a dog Hervey,' said the Doctor, 'I should love him.'

I come back with a sigh and an apology to my Lord Bath. Hervey wrote the dedication to a pamphlet attacking him; he replied with another, in which Pope may have found hints for his own epithets for Hervey—'Sporus,' the Emperor Nero's eunuch, and 'Lord Fanny'; Hervey had no option but to fight him, and a bloodless duel in the Green Park followed, and Lord Bath had only to cross the road to be at home again.

The Barings succeeded the Pulteneys, and Alexander Baring, the first Lord Ashburton, built the house we know—or at least can see for a moment if we turn up Bolton Street when its gates are open—in 1821. He was, of course, the head of Baring Brothers, so that with Sir Julius Wernher, the present occupant, Bath House does but continue a tradition of successful finance.

It is from Harriet, the wife of the second Lord Ashburton, that Bath House has its celebrity; the Lady Ashburton who, there and at the Grange, was the admired hostess of all the literati and illuminati, poets, philosophers, men of science, of her day—or 'Lady Ashburton's printers,' as Lady Jersey, quite sublimely exclusive, preferred to call them. She, truly, is a gracious presence among the shades of Piccadilly. Her name sounds in a chorus of praise through the letters of the time. 'A magnanimous and a beautiful soul,' said Carlyle; and Monkton Milnes, that 'one hardly knew whether it was the woman or the wit that was so charming.' It is provoking of Charles Greville to have dropped his acid into this cup, to have left us his opinion that she was capricious and quarrelsome. Let us be sure that their quarrel was his fault; he had the grace to admit her goodness when she was dead.

Lady Ashburton's ghost has a right to walk in Piccadilly. But I am doubtful about her society of geniuses. It was, on the whole, so sure that the wisdom of all the ages had flowered in it, so convinced of



Lady Ashburton

the golden time of 'progress,' so truly respectable and really good, that I doubt it would frighten away some other shades we have met, and, still more, some of whom later on I shall remind you. That is, it ought to frighten them; but I fear they would be stubborn, have their point of view, and hold their ground. No; Tennyson and Carlyle and Mrs. Carlyle and Bishop Wilberforce do not belong to Piccadilly. More peaceful spaces, less worldly memories, are theirs.

CHAPTER IV

OLD Q.

If one wanted to fix, among the eminent figures of our history, on a presiding genius for Piccadilly, one might wish, in a soft and gracious mood, to choose the Duchess Georgiana. Or if one wanted a world-wide name, that left a deep mark on England and Europe, one might think of the Duke of Wellington. One might wish and one might think, but one would have to fix on Old Q. He is there by right of familiarity and inveterate tradition. Old Q.'s is altogether too strong a case, and, in fact, over some less lovely aspects of Piccadilly Old Q.'s is quite the proper spirit to preside. Devonshire House and Apsley House must give way to No. 138.[1] Half a century ago

[1] And 139. They were one house in his day; the famous outside stairs to the first floor, and the lift for his senile convenience being at 138. It was at 139, then '13 Piccadilly Terrace,' Lord Byron lived.

there were scores of Londoners living who remembered the figure of him as he sat on a balcony of the house close to Hyde Park Corner, a parasol in his hand if the sun was hot, intent on observation since he could no longer act, up to the last moment of his life: a ruined monument of such open licence as London could never see again.

From the middle of the eighteenth century until ten years after its close, first as Lord March and Raglan, and after 1778, when he succeeded his cousin, husband of Prior's 'Kitty, beautiful and young,' as Duke of Queensberry, he stood high, admired or offending, against the gaze of the world. It is only fair to state, however, that in the prime of life his conduct was not more scandalous than that of many contemporaries. Horace Walpole was afraid he had scandalised his neighbourhood by harbouring Lord March and 'the Rena,' the Italian singer who was his mistress at the time; but then Strawberry Hill was a quiet and decorous place. Lord Sandwich, the Duke of Grafton, the second Lord Bolingbroke, and many others, were quite as open in their unblessed amours in London and at

Newmarket. Old Q.'s excessive reputation came merely from his continuing these manners into a generation which saw no other exemplars of them. Nor was he a man of uniquely extravagant passions at all. Many men in all ages and countries have led and lead essentially the same life, only no man of any position in this country has led it openly since he died. Monster for monster, for example, we may find a worse in the Lord Hertford who was the Regent's friend, 'Red Herrings,' the original of Thackeray's Steyne and Disraeli's Montfort, and who married Old Q.'s daughter 'Mie Mie.' A bad man, an immoral man, this Old Q. no doubt was, but I do not think his memory calls for any especial effort of denunciation on my part. I much prefer the elegant deprecation of Sir Nathaniel Wraxall: 'Unfortunately, his sources of information'—he is speaking of the Duke's good judgment—'the turf, the drawing-room, the theatre, the great world, were not the most pure, nor the best adapted to impress him with a favourable idea of his own species.' That is really the nice way of putting these things.

Not profligacy but racing made him famous as a young man. At this pursuit he was indefatigable, as the long series of his letters to George Selwyn constantly shows. He is always just come from Newmarket, or is at Newmarket, or going to Newmarket—with the Rena or the Zamperini, to be sure, but still in a spirit of business. He was a gentleman jockey in his early days, riding his own horses in the matches which were so prominent a part of the racing in these times. He seems to have been generally lucky, but not always. 'My dear George, I have lost my match and am quite broke,' begins a letter undated, but apparently from Newmarket. He gave up the turf when he succeeded—at fifty-three—to the Queensberry title and estates, but he was still associated with it in the public mind. Two years later, when there was a rumour that he was to marry Lady Henrietta Stanhope, there was a lampoon of him full of puns on his late avocation.

'Say, Jockey Lord, adventurous Macaroni,
So spruce, so old, so dapper, stiff, and starch,
Why quit the amble of thy pacing pony?
Why on a filly risk the name of March?

Ah! think, squire Groom, in spite of Pembroke's tits
An abler rider oft has lost his seat;
Young should the jockey be who mounts such bits,
Or he'll be run away with every heat.'

And so forth—all very hard on a man of fifty-three, who was to live another thirty years.

Betting, of course, went on in this sporting set all day. They bet about most things, but their favourite subjects, as any one who has read the Betting Book at White's or Brooks's will remember, were marriage and death. One would bet that a number of his friends would all be married before him—'or dead' is cautiously inserted in one such bet—or that old So-and-so would survive another year, and so on. It was about a bet of this last dismal kind that Old Q., then Lord March, and a friend went to law. Lord March bet Mr. Pigot five hundred guineas that Sir William Codrington would outlive Mr. Pigot's father. He did; but Mr. Pigot's father was actually dead when the bet was made, though, of course, neither wagerer knew it; and Mr. Pigot refused to pay, and Lord March sued him before Lord Mansfield

in the Court of Queen's Bench. In our time, of course, no such action would lie. The case was of great interest to the betting world, and Lord Ossory and other eminent sportsmen gave evidence. Mr. Pigot argued that his deceased father was in the position of a horse which had died before the day of a race: the wager in that case would be invalid. But Lord Mansfield charged the jury otherwise, and poor Pigot lost five hundred guineas, costs, father, and all.

Precisely when Old Q. settled in Piccadilly I have been unable to discover, but certainly by 1767, though perhaps not at 138. Neither precisely do I know when he enacted in the drawing-room there his famous reproduction of the scene on Mount Ida, with three of the most beautiful women in London to represent the goddesses (in the same dress, so to speak), and himself as Paris to give the apple. As Wraxall remarks, it was a scene would have been appropriate to the days of Charles the Second, though when he marvels at it in the 'correct days of George the Third,' we marvel also at the epithet.

He seems never to have been really keen

about politics, though the details of appointments are frequent in the news parts of his letters. He was a Lord of the Bedchamber for twenty-eight years, but lost that post in 1788, in consequence of a rare error in judgment. George the Third was insane, and Old Q., after careful inquiries among the doctors—with the caution of an old sportsman—thought it safe to bet on his not recovering. So he had conferences with the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York in Piccadilly, regaling them, we are told, with 'plentiful draughts of champagne,' and finally went over to the side of the Prince and Fox. But George the Third did recover, and the Duke was dismissed.

That seems to have been his one personal move in politics, but political interest brought him under the satire of Robert Burns, who seems to have had a virtuous horror for the Duke's libertine character. Old Q. went down to canvass for the Dumfries Burghs, and Burns, who was on the other side, let him have it.

> 'I'll sing the zeal Drumlanrig bears,
> Wha left the all-important cares
> Of Princes and their darlin's,'

—on 'Drumlanrig' the editor of my Burns has 'the fourth Duke of Queensberry, of infamous memory,' which is harsh. Burns's memory is, of course, immaculate. And again:

'The laddies by the banks o' Nith
Wad trust his Grace wi' a', Jamie;
But he 'll sair them as he sair'd the King,
Turn tail and rin awa', Jamie.

The day he stood his country's friend,
Or gied her faes a claw, Jamie,
Or frae puir man a blessin' wan,
That day the duke ne'er saw, Jamie.'

Wordsworth, by the way, denounced the 'degenerate Douglas' for felling the trees at Drumlanrig.

And now for his character; for no man's character is really summed up in calling him a profligate, or saying that his memory is infamous.

It was agreed among his friends that from early days this voluptuary was remarkable for strong common sense. The letters are full of it—a sort of rough sagacity, and a cynicism that was not of the affected type, a usual green sickness of youth, but the clear-eyed recognition of certain unfortunate

facts in the humanity surrounding him. So when George Selwyn, who was rather given to many words about misfortune, wrote to tell him of losing a thousand pounds, he replied—and I quote a little fully, because here certainly the style is the man—'When I came home last night I found your letter on my table. So you have lost a thousand pounds, which you have done twenty times in your lifetime, and won it again as often, and why should not the same thing happen again? I make no doubt that it will. I am sorry, however, that you have lost your money; it is unpleasant. In the meantime, what the devil signify the *le fable de Paris* or the nonsense of White's! You may be sure they will be glad you have lost your money; not because they dislike you, but because they like to laugh.' And here is a glimpse of the punishment which comes to every clear-headed sensualist, that sentiment falls away from his emotions. He writes to George of the Zamperini: 'You see what a situation I am in with my little *Buffa*. She is the prettiest creature that ever was seen: in short, I like her vastly, and she likes me because I give her money. I wish

I had never met with her'—because she broke his heart, or anything of that kind? Well, no—'because I should then have been at Paris with you, where I am sure I should have been much happier than I have been here.' To be sure, my Lord March was over forty by then,—a fact, by the way, which made Sir George Trevelyan, in his *Life of Fox*, very rightly angry for these frankenesses.

But the Duke of Queensberry was something more than merely shrewd and cynical. He carried a sense of logic to an extreme point, and applying it to an unusual sphere of human activity gained thereby a reputation of eccentricity which was not properly his. There is a logic of the passions, I know, which even commonly is sterner than the logic of the intellect; but this last, which is usually at war with the passions, Old Q. made their active and vigilant servant. He made up his mind that certain pleasures were, for him, the highest good in life, and to have them in abundance and for the longest possible time he used every means at his disposal—wealth, a great position, and all his faculties. All this calmly, relent-

lessly, even with a certain Scotch canniness, and with an indifference to the world's opinion so complete that even in an eighteenth-century duke it should gain him some credit for courage. I do not know of any voluptuary in history quite of this distinction in his profession. One or two in the early Roman Empire come to mind, but in them one finds a sort of headstrong savagery, a vulgarity of magnificence, which you may parallel in some of our own millionaires but not in the Duke of Queensberry. He, at least, was a man of taste, and if you can waive the moral point, a gentleman. At the very last, worn out and diseased, we find him writing an apology to a friend for a passing touch of irritation. An evil type of aristocracy, it may be, but at least an authentic aristocrat.

Few men indeed, even sensualists, go through life without some softness of feeling, and this one had one real affection—for his friend George Selwyn. In letters so curt and business-like and intolerant of affectation as his, a touch of feeling carries its truth with it. In the letter about the thousand pounds from which I have quoted,

after saying that he would put it right at the bank, and 'there will be no bankruptcy without we are both ruined at the same time'—this, remember, was long before Lord March came into his kingdom, in days when he himself could be 'quite broke'—he goes on: 'How can you think, my dear George, and I hope you do not think, that anybody, or anything, can make a tracasserie between you and me? I take it ill that you can even talk of it, which you do in the letter I had by Ligonier. I must be the poorest creature upon earth—after having known you so long, and always as the best and sincerest friend that any one ever had—if any one alive can make any impression upon me, where you are concerned. I told you, in a letter I wrote some time ago, that I depended more upon the continuance of our friendship than anything else in the world, which I certainly do, because I have so many reasons to know you, and I am sure I know myself.' He could make this last statement with more truth than most of us.

But sensualists harden, and the Rev. Dr. Warner found him, many years later, most unfeeling on the subject of Mie Mie. The

reader, I do not doubt, knows all about Mie Mie, but perhaps he will forgive me if, in the interest of scientific thoroughness, I tell him an oft-told tale. Mie Mie was the daughter of the Marchesa Fagniani; and George Selwyn, who loved all children, conceived for her a devotion which touched and amused and slightly bored his friends. Gossips of that day and a later have said it was doubtful whether he himself or the Duke of Queensberry was her real father. I think, however, that nobody who knows the world, and reads the Selwyn correspondence, can doubt that George could not have believed he was her father, and that, whoever it was in fact—and let us hope it was the Marquis Fagniani after all—he, and the Duke too, believed it was his friend. Letters from Warner to Selwyn assume the parentage of Old Q. Well, Selwyn wanted the child to be given up to him, to adopt her, and Madame Fagniani refused, and half accepted, and refused again, and led poor George a cruel dance over Europe in his pathetic and slightly ridiculous quest. In all this Old Q.—who certainly professed no parental interest in the child—was sympathetic,

though his common sense could not but be in arms, and he pointed out that the more eager George showed himself, the more Madame Fagniani, a capricious woman who thought herself a neglected beauty, would torment him; also that he, the Duke, was the last person who profitably could interfere.

However, when George at last succeeded, and the child was given up to him, the Duke began a little to pooh-pooh his friend's excessive tenderness and the fuss that was made over Mie Mie. Dr. Warner used to call on him in Piccadilly with accounts of her progress, and was indignant at his want of tenderness. Warner, by the way, was a good man strangely maligned by Thackeray, who said he was a parasite and licked Old Q.'s boots; whereas he said plainly he disliked Old Q., and only frequented him to oblige Selwyn, for whom it is quite clear he had a sincere regard. Warner's letters are by far the wittiest in the whole collection.

'Well, and how does Mie Mie go on?' asked the Duke, and Warner expatiated on her talents, 'in the fond hope to please him,' and said she was learning everything.

'Pshaw! she will be praised for what the child of a poor person would be punished. Such sort of education is all nonsense,' and so on. In this I detect an unwillingness on the Duke's part to let the Rev. Dr. Warner assume too much. Another time George had written from the country to Warner about 'the little flannel petticoat' Mie Mie was wearing, and Warner read the letter to Old Q., 'with which he ought to have been pleased, but which he treated with a pish or a damn.'

Dr. Warner was severe on him for this levity. 'I have many acquaintance,' says he, 'in an humbler sphere of life, with as much information, with as strong sense, and, as far as appears to *me*, with abundantly more amiable qualities of the heart, than his Grace of Queensberry.'

Well, I am fond of children, and am not a wicked duke, but I confess that if my morning avocations were interrupted by clergymen reading letters about little flannel petticoats, even my own daughter's, I might pish too. Selwyn and Warner expected too much of a voluptuary.

Old Q., however, left Mie Mie a fortune.

And that brings me betimes, since I grow garrulous, to the end.

George Selwyn and all his old friends were long dead. He was blind of an eye and deaf of an ear, toothless and infirm. For his estates in Scotland he had never cared; Amesbury in Wiltshire, a place of most beautiful surroundings, he had ceased to visit; even his villa at Richmond, where he had grown tired of the Thames with its 'flow, flow, flow,' he had given up; Piccadilly was his home, and there he sat in the sun under his parasol. But this old man, much over eighty, was still keen to see life, still ready to talk if he could not hear.

'Never did any man,' says Wraxall, who saw him much in these days, 'retain more animation, or manifest a sounder judgment. Even his figure, though emaciated, still remained elegant; his manners were noble and polished; his conversation gay, always entertaining, generally original, rarely instructive, frequently libertine, indicating a strong, sagacious, masculine intellect, with a thorough knowledge of man.' And the statesman Windham notes in his diary two years before Old Q.'s death, how he 'went

in to the Duke of Queensberry, whom I saw at his window; full of life but very difficult to communicate with, and greatly declined in bodily powers.'

There he sat on his balcony, and the world saw him as it went by and moralised over him. Leigh Hunt, for example, often saw him there, 'and wondered at the longevity of his dissipation and the prosperity of his worthlessness.' Many tales of him went about. They said he took baths of milk, and quite a prejudice against drinking milk arose in the neighbourhood. It seems to be true that he kept a groom, Jack Radford, ready mounted to follow ladies whose appearance interested him as he looked down on Piccadilly.

There he sat, with his neat peruke, and his strong-featured, lively, sharp old face. It seemed as though he would sit there for ever; but at last, in 1810, at the age of eighty-six, he died, and was buried under the altar in St. James's Church, Piccadilly, and his will, with its various bequests to favourites, caused much more sensation than that of Mr. Cecil Rhodes. 'The Star of Piccadilly,' as a rhyme of the day called him, was set.

CHAPTER V

THE GHOSTS OF ALBANY

NOT 'The Albany': the definite article, though now universal, was not used by the earliest tenants of the chambers, and it becomes a writer who gossips about them to respect their custom.

We need not linger overmuch on the history of the building. There were originally three houses on the site, and the most eastern of them was occupied by the third Lord Sunderland, son of that arch-traitor whose elaborate disloyalty to James the Second is one of the darker studies in the psychology of politics. He bought the other two houses and made one of the three, with a fine room for a finer library now at Blenheim. Stephen Fox, the second Lord Holland, lived here afterwards, who was like his brother Charles in most things save genius, fat, good-

natured, fond of cards and a bottle. It was the birth of a son to him that brought the Jews upon poor Charles, no longer next heir to the large family fortune, ill-gotten by their father, who speculated with the country's money (in his possession as paymaster) on his knowledge as a minister. By no means an unamiable ghost to collogue withal on a quiet night, Stephen Fox, a little breathless with bulkiness and good living, crossing Piccadilly, where his house was, to haunt Brooks's in St. James's Street. He sold it to the first Lord Melbourne, who rebuilt it with a ballroom ceiling by Cipriani, and then changed houses with the Duke of York and Albany, son of George the Second, and hence the name. It was turned into chambers for bachelors, the garden being built over for more profit, in 1804.

There is a rare and unaffected dignity about Albany still. The courtyard and the house do much to shut out the railway-station noises of contemporary Piccadilly, and Vigo Street at the other end is tolerably quiet, so that it is possible to muse there, even in the daytime. Walking through the arcade with its low roof I have often agreed

with Macaulay's remark when he went to live there, that it was a college life in the West End of London. That is to say, for Macaulay and for me, if I were rich enough to live in Albany; other famous tenants have led lives there not possible in colleges,

'If ancient tales say true nor wrong those holy men.'

Many an interesting man has lived in Albany. One of the most attractive of them all to me, and one who more than most of the others may be supposed to haunt Piccadilly, is Mat Lewis, 'the Monk,' and since his fame is something dimmed now I will treat him with some circumstance.

Most of us, as we grow older, abandon any feud we may have had, or been thought to have, with Mrs. Grundy. Now and then, however, I still feel a stir of my young dislike of her exploits, and it is an attraction for me in poor Mat Lewis that he was notable among Mrs. Grundy's victims.

Matthew Gregory Lewis was born in 1775, the son of a rich man, and was sent to Westminster and Christ Church, and after that to Weimar and Paris. He plunged into writing early, and had written poems,

a novel, a comedy—all by seventeen, and all forgotten. He was an attaché at the Hague in 1794, and there he wrote his most famous work, now also forgotten, *Ambrosio, or the Monk*, which was ultimately to destroy him socially. At first, however, it made him fashionable—very fashionable, and that precisely was what Mat Lewis, a harmless, vain, good-natured creature, most wished to be. A literary lion in 'Society,' he was a fashionable lion among authors. It was a great event for an aspiring author to be presented to Mat Lewis, as we know from the confession of one of them, namely—who do you think it was?—Walter Scott. Of all the revenges of time in the matter of authorship I think this one of the oddest—that Walter Scott was proud to know Mat Lewis, and to receive his quite good-natured patronage.

Mat was bringing out his *Tales of Wonder*, and Erskine told him that one Walter Scott, a young advocate in Edinburgh, had translated some stirring things from the German. A correspondence followed, and later Mat went down to Edinburgh and asked Scott to dinner, and Scott confessed—with the

utter absence of conceit native to that noble character—confessed, thirty years later, that he had never felt such elation before. He had seen Burns when he was seventeen, and this was the first poet he had seen since. Poor Mat!

So Mat Lewis was a lion in the literary world and the fashionable, enjoying it vastly, being, as Scott tells us, 'fonder of great people than he ought to have been, either as a man of talent, or as a man of fashion. He had always dukes and duchesses in his mouth, and was pathetically fond of any one that had a title. You would have sworn he had been a parvenu of yesterday, yet he had lived all his life in good society.' Byron, too, has a story of Lewis crying at Oatlands because the Duchess of York had 'said something *so* kind' to him. 'Never mind, Lewis, don't cry. She could not mean it,' said a brutal listener.

Mat was also a bore; 'a good man,' says Byron, 'a clever man, but a bore, a damned bore, one may say.' Scott tells us—and it is something for a man's memory that it is kept alive, so far as it is so, by Scott and Byron—of Charles Fox in his latter days, very

fat and lethargic, enduring an attack from Lewis, lying 'like a fat ox which for some time endures the persecution of a buzzing fly, rather than rise to get rid of it; and then at last he got up and heavily plodded his way to the other side of the room.'

Yet this absurd little snob and bore was the kindest creature alive, sharing his income with his mother, who was separated from his father, and when his father, enraged, cut it down by half, sharing *that*, and doing good by stealth. Imagination he had, not of a broad and sweeping kind, fantastic, weird, rather morbid, but yet imagination, and after all the hobgoblin terrors which seem childish to us struck a serious note for those days. Clever, too, was Mat Lewis, and a man of taste, with a notable ear for rhythm.

We can see him in Albany, K.1, in his glory, an extremely small and boyish figure; 'the least man I ever saw to be strictly well and neatly made,' says Scott, with queer eyes which 'projected like those of some insect, and were flattish in their orbit.' He had the panels of his bookcases filled with looking-glasses, and kept a black servant.

It was cruel and wanton in Mrs. Grundy to persecute this harmless little personage, with his snobbery and tediousness, and projecting eyes and kindly heart—cruel because, for a clever man, he must have felt it so bitterly, and wanton because she really could not have cared. Mathias, in the *Pursuits of Literature*, attacked his famous book *The Monk* on the score of blasphemy and indecency, and Mrs. Grundy, who had never read it, but had exalted Lewis on the strength of its brilliant reputation, took alarm. There was a fierce outcry against Mat; an injunction was moved for against his book, and—oh dear! oh dear!—'young ladies,' says the invaluable Captain Gronow, 'were forbidden to speak to him.' The Monk, one remembers, though a wealthy, was not a marrying man, and conceivably the matrons had a spite against him. It was all very like Mrs. Grundy, but it was hard in her to do it to Mat Lewis who so loved her smiles.

Perhaps the Monk was embittered by this treatment, or perhaps he hated Sheridan anyhow, but his verses on Sheridan were not characteristic of his good-nature.

'For worst abuse of finest parts
Was Misophil begotten;
There might indeed be *blacker* hearts,
But none could be more *rotten*.'

I am sure it was not because Sheridan had scored off him about his play *Castle Spectre*—a fine name, is it not?—replying to Mat's offer to bet on some occasion what Sheridan owed him for it as manager, that he never made large bets, but would bet him what it was worth.

Mat's kindliness, however, co-existed with some capacity for quarrelling, and indeed one commonly finds the two qualities together: he who never quarrels is apt to be a little cold-blooded or so, and not much given to active benevolence. Lord Melbourne told Charles Greville an odd tale of the Monk's quarrel with Sir Henry Lushington. It was convenient to Mat to stay with Lushington and his sister at Naples; so he wrote to suspend the quarrel, and after the visit wrote to resume it—the *status quo ante pacem*—and did so 'with rather more *acharnement* than before.' There is a suggestion of character in this, I think—of something solid below the folly and vanity.

The Monk's father died in 1812, leaving plantations in the West Indies, whither Mat journeyed in 1815. He made Byron a parting present of some preserved ginger, which his affectionate friend said he could never eat without tears—it was so hot. He visited Byron at Venice on his return, and went riding with the poet by the Brenta, the greater and absent-minded poet leading the way, the lesser and short-sighted poet following—into a ditch, and into the river, and into collision with the diligence, but all the time 'talking without intermission, for he was a man of many words.' On an expedition with Walter Scott poor Mat grew weary, and had to be carried, 'in his shooting array of a close sky-blue jacket, and the brightest red pantaloons I ever saw on a human breech. He also had a kind of feather in his cap.'

This dear, ridiculous creature went again to Jamaica in 1817, with the characteristic intention of improving the condition of the slaves, and died on the voyage home of yellow fever. They buried his body at sea, but his spirit must have gone on to England, and stayed awhile in Albany, K.1, with the

mirror-panelled bookcases. It is strange that this sham great author, with his bubble reputation of a day, should be yet alive for us, not pilloried by some Pope, but gently and affectionately recorded and pictured by two authentic giants of his trade.

> 'I would give many a sugar cane,
> Monk Lewis were alive again!'

said Byron, and 'I would pay my share,' added Scott. They are gone to him now, and one fancies their ghosts in Piccadilly, stumping with the limp both had in life, smiling protectingly, and this absurd little figure, wonderfully dressed, strutting garrulous between them.

Another vanished memory, so far as work of his own is concerned, is that of Henry Luttrell, who lived in I. 5. But Albany and Piccadilly seem to belong more to our social than our literary history, and from no gossip that has to do with the social life of his time can Henry Luttrell be omitted. Yet there is little to say of him now. 'Where are the snows of yester year?' one may ask of dead wits almost as surely as of dead beauties.

Luttrell was a great wit of his day, the first half or so of the nineteenth century, and one meets him in memoirs far more respectfully noticed than poor Mat Lewis. He was one of those men, unhappily less frequently met now than then, who are of real and definite account in the society of their day for purely social merits—without position or money, or a mob-acclaimed repute. He was the author, it is true, of the *Letters to Julia*, which had a fashionable vogue, and were a guarantee of mental parts in the eyes of his contemporaries, but his reputation could not have endured long on this one achievement. By birth he was illegitimate—a son of Lord Carhampton. His means were slender, and he had no political importance.

Luttrell owed his social position simply to his social qualities: he was agreeable, a good talker, and had a fund of sound sense at the service of his friends. He and Samuel Rogers hunted in couples; it was said they were seldom seen apart, but that when they were, either abused the other. But if he abused Sam Rogers he abused no one else: his wit was said to be as kind as the banker-poet's was malignant. It is a pleasant

memory to have left behind one. Pity it should be faded.

Greater men, of course, than Mat Lewis or Henry Luttrell have lived in Albany. Of Byron I shall write elsewhere. Bulwer Lytton afterwards lived in Byron's rooms, A.2, as no doubt he was delighted to live. You can picture him, if you like, putting on the stays which so greatly annoyed Tennyson, and otherwise making the most of himself. Other men, too, whose names mean something, but either I do not see their ghosts in Piccadilly, or I have nothing to say of them in this sort of light narration. It is clearly impossible, however, to pass over Thomas Babington Macaulay.

I do not pretend to believe, personally, for a moment, that Macaulay's ghost wastes time in haunting any scene of his labour on earth. Wherever he is, I am sure he is talking hard, or writing earnestly, for the instruction of his companions, and has no leisure to muse on the accidents of his past. He is ready to furnish, I am sure, the exact and complete dates of his residence in Albany, the amount of his rent—it was £90,

by the way, if you care to know—and a vigorous analysis of its advantages and defects. You cannot expect any hovering from this matter-of-fact intelligence, and your illusion of his presence must be entirely subjective. Still, if you like to imagine him in Albany, it is easy to do so.

We know the furniture of his sitting-room in E.1, when he went to live there in 1840. He had, Sir George Trevelyan tells us, 'half a dozen fine engravings from his favourite great masters; a handsome French clock, provided with a singularly melodious set of chimes, the gift of his friend and publisher, Mr. Thomas Longman; and the well-known bronze statuettes of Voltaire and Rousseau (neither of them heroes of his own) which had been presented to him by Lady Holland as a remembrance of her husband.' And we can imagine the historian himself seated at his desk amid these agreeable surroundings—a short, stout man, with a homely face and a fine forehead. There he wrote the first two volumes of his history, and there he got for them the £20,000 at which later historians marvel and weep. We can imagine him, further, in

his dressing-room, making clumsy efforts to tie his neckcloth, and trying to shave with an unskilful hand, since these physical peculiarities are recorded of him. Completing his toilet and looking round his apartment, he reflected with pleasure on the college life in the West End of London, to which I have already referred, and also—I quote from the same letter of his—to the fact that it was 'in a situation which no younger son of a duke would be ashamed to be put on his card.' It was rather a trivial reflection for a philosopher, but the greatest of us have our trivial moments.

Perhaps it is best, however, to imagine Macaulay at one of his famous breakfasts. There he sits, and if you have the critical temper of Mr. Charles Greville, you would notice that his voice was unmusical and monotonous, and his face heavy and dull—with nothing about him, in fact, to bespeak the genius and learning within. But much evidence of the genius and learning would have been given you had you really been there. Any subject you mentioned your host would know all about, and tell all about, until some one who might take

liberties, like Lady Holland, would say it was enough, when he would stop as one replaces a book on the shelf, and take down another. If you put a question to him while the conversation was general, he would wait for a pause, and then repeat it, and give his answer to the table: that, at least, was Mrs. Brookfield's experience. Presently, if you were lucky, you would enjoy one of his 'brilliant flashes of silence,' as Sydney Smith called them. One of Macaulay's breakfasts is described by the late Duke of Argyll. (It is pleasing to know that so very cocksure a personage as Macaulay was admired by the Duke, who was not diffident.) It was the day of table-turning, and they tried the experiment with a heavy table. Macaulay pooh-poohed the idea, but for all that the table had the temerity to turn violently. Did any one give it a push? was the question put to each guest by the host. One of them was Bishop Wilberforce, 'Soapy Sam,' renowned for saying the comforting thing, and so when all the rest denied, he admitted that he might have unconsciously given a slight push. It would have been quite insufficient for the effect,

but Macaulay's great mind was relieved. A scene for an observer of comic character.

I notice with regret that I have not written of Macaulay so genially as I am wont to write. His personality does not attract me, I fear; and then he was a partisan in history, and in my own little reading I incline to be a partisan on the other side. Well, we all have our prejudices, and Macaulay's memory can afford mine. Besides, as I said, I am in no fear of meeting his ghost.



Lord Byron

CHAPTER VI

BYRON

ALBANY saw the last of Byron's bachelor life, and 139 Piccadilly the last of his life in England.

He went to live in Albany, in the original house on the ground floor, set A.2, on March 28, 1814. 'This night,' he writes in his journal of that date, 'got into my new apartments, rented of Lord Althorpe, on a lease of seven years. Spacious, and room for my books and sabres. *In* the *house*, too, another advantage.' His landlord was about to be married. March of the following year saw him also married at 139 Piccadilly, and so many references to him in other people's memoirs and stories refer to his rooms in Albany, where he lived only this one year, that I imagine they are confused with his other lodgings—in Bennet Street and St.

James's Street—about town. His life in Albany is typical, however—unhappily, the reader may suppose—of his bachelor life in London.

He continued there his alternation between excess and a frightened—lest he should grow fat—and unwise abstinence. The very night before he settled in Albany, he dined *tête-à-tête* with his friend, Scrope Davies, at the Cocoa Tree—64 St. James's Street, where there is still a club of the name—and, he tells us in the journal, 'sat from six till midnight—drank between us one bottle of champagne and six of claret, neither of which wines ever affect me.' Poor Scrope was less immune (it was Scrope Davies, by the way, who said that Byron was only 'a fair holiday drinker'), for he became 'tipsy and pious, and I was obliged to leave him praying to I know not what purpose or pagod.' And his first letter from Albany, April 9, to Thomas Moore, contains an account equally distressing to us. 'I have also been drinking, and on one occasion'—he was so proud of it! which I think in itself proves it was no habit, and remember, censor, he was only twenty-six—

'on one occasion, with three other friends at the Cocoa Tree, from six till four, yea, unto five in the matin. We clareted and champagned till two—then supped, and finished with a kind of regency punch composed of madeira, brandy, and *green* tea, no real water being admitted therein. There was a night for you!' It would have been a last night for me!

Then he would live for days on biscuits and soda-water, which he ordered in two dozen at a time—there is a bill for it yet extant — and drank copiously. Byron's genius as a poet came at the right moment for its full effect on Europe, but his stomach was born out of due time. Were he living in our day, the apostles of new diets would have found in him their most attentive listener, their most enthusiastic practitioner.

Whether claret or soda-water was his drink, however, he satisfied a large part of our contemporary morality by severe physical exercise. He boxed for an hour a day in Albany with Gentleman Jackson, and practised the broadsword with Henry Angelo. This famous master records an

occasion when they were so engaged and Hobhouse entered the room; how Byron, characteristically, 'did not desist from advancing on me, but seemed more determined to show his friend how well he could beat his broadsword master.' And he adds this curious account: 'His preparation for his exercise was rather singular; first stripping himself, then putting on a thick flannel jacket, and over it a pelisse lined with fur, tied round with a Turkish shawl. When he had taken a sufficient gymnastic sodorific, if he did not go directly and increase it between the blankets, he had his valet to rub him down.' There is a picture for you to imagine, if you visit Albany, A.2.

All such things are significant in the life of a great man, as we know on Carlyle's authority; but let us turn to matters more immediately of the spirit—although the boxing was done 'to keep up the ethereal part of me.' There is not much to be gained from the journal, however. He wrote no more in it, having kept it some five months, after April 19. There is a passage no bookish man can read without sympathy in praise of solitude and getting home to one's

own room. 'I do not know that I am happiest when alone; but this I am sure of, that I never am long in the society even of *her* I love (God knows too well, and the devil probably too), without a yearning for the company of my lamp and my utterly confused and tumbled-over library.' *Venimus larem ad nostrum.* That big room in Albany was a comfort to the poet, though 'Lara' and 'The Ode to Napoleon' was all the poetry he wrote there. It was the time of the first abdication, and Napoleon was much in Byron's mind. He and other Whigs were, of course, 'pro-Boers,' and expressed their feelings with an immunity at which our extreme Imperialists to-day must marvel. 'April 8.—Out of town six days. On my return, found my poor little pagod, Napoleon, pushed off his pedestal;—the thieves are in Paris.' . . . And the journal ends excitedly on the same subject: I cannot help wondering if the poet had been in the society of Scrope Davies. 'And to prevent me from returning, like a dog, to the vomit of memory, I tear out the remaining leaves of this volume, and write, in *Ipecacuanha*, "that the Bourbons are restored!!!"—

"Hang up philosophy!" To be sure, I have long despised myself and man, but I never spat in the face of my species before —"O fool! I shall go mad!"' Some faint touch of the Cocoa Tree there, one is forced to think, but in no mental condition did Byron forget his Shakespeare.

At this time the rage of his lionising was over, but he was still going much into society, sending verses to Lady Jersey, mixing with Rogers and Moore; making love unwisely, and I think, in spite of the turmoil he professed to dislike, taking more pleasure in life than it gave him often. Lady Caroline Lamb's affair was over; Lady Oxford's and Lady Frances Webster's had been since. According, however, to a letter from Lady Caroline to Captain Medwin—Thackeray's Captain Sumph, with his banal stories of the poet—written after Byron's death, it was in Albany they parted for the last time. 'But it is also true, that, the last time we parted for ever, as he pressed his lips on mine (it was in the Albany), he said, "Poor Caro, if every one hates me, you, I see, will never change—no, not with ill-usage!" And I said, "Yes, I *am* changed,

and shall come near you no more." For then he showed me letters, and told me things I cannot repeat, and all my attachment went. This was our last parting scene —well I remember it. It had an effect upon me not to be conceived—three years I had worshipped him.' It is touching, but I hope the lady's warm imagination played her false—at least about the telling things and the showing letters. And yet, I know, there were two Byrons—he who felt and thought deeply, and acted generously; and the unworthy Byron, who was *fanfaron de ses vices* and wanted to startle and shock: it is possible, this showing of letters, but I hope she was mistaken. Here, in any case, is another scene in Albany for the reader's fancy.

The letters of Byron from Albany are not of any especial interest. They are characteristic, however; there is the authentic Byron in them, egotistical, unselfish, vain, modest, generous — we find him giving £3000 to his sister Augusta—humorous, affectionate. Much of his tenancy of these rooms he spent in the country, and, as we know, his ill-fated proposal of marriage

to Miss Milbanke was written from Newstead, and there he received his answer. On March 31, 1815, he writes from Piccadilly a married man.

'13 Piccadilly Terrace' was half of Old Q.'s house, and is now 139 Piccadilly. Old Q., who died in 1810, left it to 'Mie Mie,' Lady Hertford; but Byron rented it from Elizabeth, Duchess of Devonshire. The rent was £700 a year, and the payment involved some correspondence when Byron was settled in Italy. A short while afterwards the house passed to the family of Lord Rosebery, to whom, I believe, it still belongs. Old Q., Byron, Lord Rosebery—to be sure, a house of varied distinctions.

While Byron lived there he wrote 'Parisina' and 'The Siege of Corinth,' met Walter Scott for the first time, served on the Drury Lane Committee, was served with sixteen writs, had an execution in his house, and separated from his wife.

Of all these experiences, perhaps the best to tell of are those on the Committee, of which Byron had a lively recollection, and wrote of years afterwards in his 'Detached Thoughts.' His letters of the time are full

of the Committee's perplexities, which, as any reader with a knowledge of theatres may guess, were many and various.

His colleagues on the Committee were Lord Essex, George Lamb, Douglas Kinnaird, and Peter Moore—'all very zealous and in earnest to do good, and so forth.' Of course they were; and the experiment, not often seen since, of a theatre run by educated people with an interest in contemporary literature, was certainly an attractive one. Committees seldom do much, however, and this had an intractable subject-matter. 'We were but few, and never agreed! There was Peter Moore, who contradicted Kinnaird, and Kinnaird, who contradicted everybody.'

It was not from the actors that their troubles chiefly came. In Byron's time actors did not expect all the reverence which is not paid to cabinet ministers, and Byron's *bonhomie* and humour no doubt conciliated them. 'Players,' says he, 'are said to be an impracticable people. They are so. But I managed to steer clear of any disputes with them; and, excepting one debate with the Elder Byrne about Miss Smith's *Pas de*

(something—I forget the technicals), I do not remember any litigation of my own. I used to protect Miss Smith, because she was like Lady Jane Harley in the face; and likenesses go a great way with me'—Byron's idea of impartial casting in the interests of the theatre seems to have been odd. His colleagues reproved him for 'buffooning with the Histrions, and throwing things into confusion by treating light matters with levity.' Edmund Kean was their star, and for him Byron had an enthusiasm; his emotion over Kean's 'Sir Giles Overreach' is an old story.

I am sorry to say it was the authors, not the players, who gave most trouble. The Committee, and Byron in particular, were anxious to induce writers of reputation to do something for the stage. But even then it seemed already fated that the stage in England could only be served by—how can one put it inoffensively?—well, by people who were not otherwise of account as writers. Here, however, was a rare opportunity for writers of account at least to be considered with a bias in their favour, and not the other way, and it was a thousand

pities it was not taken. Walter Scott would do nothing, neither would Thomas Moore, nor, indeed, Byron. There was, to be sure, a consideration which now has an opposite reason: to a popular author the stage offered nothing like the money he could make in other ways. Walter Scott wrote a note on the passage in the 'Detached Thoughts' in which Byron laments that he was asked in vain, recollecting the occasion, and how he declined, partly from the probability of not succeeding, and partly from dislike of being kept in subjection by 'the good folks of the green room: *ceteraque ingenio non subeunda meo*,' and how Byron emphatically agreed with him. Whereon Lockhart has a note of his own, saying that this was nonsense: 'neither player nor manager has lived in our time that durst have stood erect'—they are braver in *our* time!—'in the presence of either of these men,' etc.: that *ceteraque* meant 'to say nothing of money matters.' It may have been so, but times are altogether changed in this respect, and yet our best men have nothing to do with the theatre. The trend of their thought and labour had set away

from it then, and still so sets, though there may be signs of a return.

However, Byron tried Coleridge also, and Maturin, recommended by Scott, sent *Bertram*, which afterwards succeeded, and 'Mr. Sotheby obligingly offered *all* his tragedies,' and Byron got *Ivan* accepted, and had a long correspondence with the author, and then Kean didn't like it, and the author was angry, and so forth and so on. It is odd to think of a man who—criticise his poetry as you will—had beyond cavil one of the greatest and most masculine intellects England has known, frittering away his time over these futilities. But he seems to have enjoyed them. 'Then the scenes I had to go through! The authors and the authoresses, the Milliners, the wild Irishmen, the people from Brighton, from Blackwall, from Chatham, from Cheltenham, from Dublin, from Dundee, who came in upon me! . . . Miss Emma Somebody, with a play entitled the "Bandit of Bohemia," or some such title or production; Mr. O'Higgins, then resident at Richmond, with an Irish tragedy, in which the unities could not fail to be observed, for the protagonist

was chained by the leg to a pillar during the chief part of the performance.' Mr. O'Higgins was 'a wild man, of a salvage appearance,' and Byron was afraid to laugh. Social pressure was of course applied to him, and we find him writing to Mrs. George Lamb, who had written to him on behalf of some protégé, and said she would 'try to soften' his colleagues, Kinnaird and George Lamb, that he was the most obdurate, and insisted on being softened first. It was altogether an amusing game.

More so than the writs, though from these too Byron managed to get instruction and amusement. When the bailiff descended on 139 Piccadilly Byron wanted to know if he had nothing for Sheridan. 'Oh, Sheridan? Ay, I have this,' and a 'dismal pocket-book,' as Thackeray called it, was produced. 'But, my Lord, I have been in Mr. Sheridan's house a twelvemonth at a time; a civil gentleman—knows how to deal with *us*.' Byron took the hint, and happily did not have the bailiff for a year with him. Of Sheridan, by the way, he was seeing much at this time—Sheridan woefully in his decline, drunken, maudlin, quarrelsome.

Byron always liked and admired him, and said 'his very dregs are better than "the first sprightly runnings" of others,' but as he appears in the records of this day there seems to me little to value in him. He never laughed; he would sit silent for long, and then attack some fellow-guest; and he would weep and complain that he had never had a shilling of his own—though, as Byron said, he had extracted a good many of other people's. There have been more amiable ruins than this; but, no doubt, when you have supported a man in his cups 'down a damned corkscrew staircase, which had certainly been constructed before the discovery of fermented liquors,' you feel kindly towards him. How strange now and boyish seem these orgies of orators and poets! The dinner-party in question had been 'first silent, then talky, then argumentative, then disputatious, then unintelligible, then altogethery, then inarticulate, and then drunk.' What a life!

Well, it was soon to end for Byron. On the 10th of December 1815 his daughter Ada was born, and on the 25th of April 1816 he sailed for Ostend. There has been too much

of debate and theory about Byron's separation from his wife that I should add to it in this casual place. A dreadful reason in the background may or may not have decided Lady Byron; it is difficult to believe from her letters that it was so. But tempers which could not agree, which were doomed never to agree, were reason enough for the separation. Many an argument, shot through with pain and heart-burning, must there have been in that house in Piccadilly; many a sad and anxious debate when she had gone, and his sister and his friends came to him. If houses harbour the passions and sorrows of the dead, I should not like to live there. A great heart and a great brain stabbed by great trouble, racked by little troubles—it is an evil memory.

In those last days Byron wrote the beautiful verses to his wife, 'Fare you well,' and the bitter verses on her confidante, Mrs. Clermont, 'Born in the garret, in the kitchen bred'—which some fool or traitor sent to the newspapers, and which was the signal for the public outcry on him. The private outcry had been long set going, and had barred him from every great house

in London but Lady Jersey's. In these last days, too, that the inevitable touch of farce should not be absent, little Nathan the Jew singer was continually in the house—Nathan, who had persuaded him to write the 'Hebrew Melodies,' and drew Tom Moore's chaff on him; 'Sun-burn Nathan,' says Byron in a letter—and Nathan got £50 from him and sent him a present of Passover cakes. Byron's polite acknowledgment of this gift seems to be the last letter he wrote in London.

Byron had signed the deed of separation, delivering it as 'the act and deed,' as a rare bit of gossip in a dull book of letters published lately tells us, not of himself but 'of Mrs. Clermont.' He had parted from Augusta, 'almost the last being,' as he wrote to his wife, 'whom you have left me to part with,' and the end of his life in England came. There is a last scene from 139 Piccadilly: you see him come out, his beautiful pale face without the light that made it, said Walter Scott, 'a thing to dream of,' and limp into his carriage.

CHAPTER VII

OF BURLINGTON HOUSE

THE memories of Burlington House are mostly commingled with the arts, so much so that as one muses on its history an impression rather of art than of humanity is predominant. One thinks of one art or another, exampled in varying degrees of excellence, from the time of its first renown until now when the art of painting flourishes or languishes in its halls. Indeed, if horrid rumour be credited, its first existence is made lurid by an ancient art, that of poisoning, to wit. As a practitioner or patron of an art almost everybody who lived in Burlington House is known, if known at all. Yet from the haze of dilettantism or achievement some humanity does emerge, enough to furnish me a chapter.

The first Lord Burlington was living here in 1668, and the house was not built until

1665, so that it seems likely that he was the first occupant. According to Pepys, however, the house was built by Sir John Denham, and if that was so, and if he did not build it for the earl, he may have lived there a year or two. In that case the house began with a note of humanity only too sharp and recognisable—the comedy or tragedy of an old man and a young wife and a lover. The third person was a king's brother, which for some minds may give a touch of romance to a squalid story of human weakness and vice.

It is all in Grammont, a story most congenial to that lively Count, or to Hamilton his biographer. Sir John Denham was an old man. Grammont says seventy-nine, and rather tiresome research says only fifty; still, fifty counted for old in love-affairs when Charles the Second was king. In May 1665 he married Margaret Brook, who was only seventeen. She was a pretty toy. The Duke of York had been in love with her, on and off, other ladies intervening, for some time. His latest mistress had been Lady Chesterfield, whose lord—it was an act which amazed and disgusted Grammont—

carried her off into the country. So he was on with the old love again, and Lady Denham was to be given a place in the Duchess's household, and the usual routine of these affairs was to be followed. Only she died in January 1667. Grammont says that Sir John Denham, unable to follow Lord Chesterfield's example for lack of a country house, sent her on a longer journey. The populace thought he had poisoned her, and was infuriated—why it should have cared I know not—and had to be appeased with a large distribution of burnt wine at her funeral. It also accused the Duchess of York, or at least Andrew Marvell did, who should have known better. Perhaps it was rather sad, as the pretty toy was so young, and had only acted after her kind. Anyhow, she was dead, and the Duke of York promptly fell in love with some one else.

When I was a very young man I used to read such stories as those in Grammont's memoirs with much pleasure. Nowadays I find them a little banal and monotonous, too unrelieved by fancy or subtlety. They are disagreeable, but this one of Sir John Denham and Margaret Brook and the Duke

of York seems more so than probably it was, for one need not suppose she really was poisoned. In the seventeenth century there were many cases of alleged poisoning which might have been only cases of medical ignorance. People had appendicitis and were bled for it, and naturally expired. Henrietta of England, Duchess of Orleans, the most fascinating woman of her days, who was thought to have been poisoned with the connivance of that wretched crétin, her husband —Charles the Second, her brother, refused to open the Duke's letter announcing her death—probably died of peritonitis. As for Lady Denham, that simple wanton, if her ghost emerges from Burlington House into Piccadilly, save for its dress it will be quite undistinguished in the crowd.

The original house seems to have been large, but comparatively plain, built of red brick. It had a big garden behind, which of course touched the open country. Horace Walpole has been censured for attributing to the first Lord Burlington the wish to have no building beyond him; that is said to be absurd, since Clarendon House and

Berkeley House in the west were already standing, but he might well have referred to the north. There is nothing to say of this Lord Burlington, but I should like to think that his brother Robert Boyle, that gentle and lovable man of science, the inventor of the air-pump and first President of the Royal Society, came sometimes from Pall Mall, where he lived, to dine in Piccadilly.

It was the third earl, great-grandson of the first, who renewed and embellished and made everything of Burlington House, with the assistance of Colin Campbell and in imitation of Palladio. I do not propose to go into architectural merits and differences. The reader can go look for himself: that is to say, he can still see the first floor, which with the ground floor (only that is hidden by a portico) was left in 1866, when the rest of the buildings and a beautiful colonnade were destroyed, and the present wall and wings, such as they are, were built. For my part, in my bigoted love for the plain and simple in London houses, I wish the old house of red brick had been left exposed to view: it was left, encased in

stone, as the nucleus of the grander mansion. The new Burlington House and its art-loving owner were the theme of much eulogy and satire. The satire in Martial, of the fine house with nowhere to eat or sleep, was Englished for Burlington House as it had been for Blenheim; and Hogarth drew two plates caricaturing the 'Taste of the Town,' and 'The Man of Taste.' In the latter Pope is spattering the Duke of Chandos (whom he had depreciated as an amateur to exalt his own patron) with whitewash, and Burlington is going up a ladder like a workman.

This third Earl of Burlington was the patron of Pope and Gay and Handel. He was intimate with Swift, but you can hardly be said to be the patron of a man whom you allow to bully your wife. The characteristic anecdote of the Dean is something musty. 'Lady Burlington, I hear you can sing: sing me a song.' She refused, and Swift said, 'I suppose you take me for one of your poor hedge parsons; sing when I bid you.' She wept and left the room. . . . 'Pray, madam, are you as proud and as ill-natured as when I saw you last?' 'No, Mr. Dean; I will

sing to you, if you please.' No modern thinks more of Swift's greatness as a writer than I, but I wish the lady had answered differently.

She was Lady Dorothy Savile, a clever daughter of a clever family, and I think the most interesting memories of Burlington House are of her and two other women — her unhappy daughter, Dorothy, and Mademoiselle Violette, who became Mrs. Garrick.

Poor Lady Dorothy Boyle's is the story of a foolish marriage, which ended tragically, of bitter sorrow and untimely death. It is something of a coincidence for the house that she, like Margaret Brook, was seventeen when she married, and died not a year afterwards, and that her death was laid at her husband's door. But here the charge was all too probable, and here the victim was innocent.

She fell in love with Lord Euston, heir of the second Duke of Grafton, and therefore great-grandson of Charles the Second, whose kindly qualities of heart were, alas! sadly to seek in him. He was, in fact, a brute of the worst reputation. Report had it that he

wanted to marry his brother's widow, Lady Augustus FitzRoy, but he did marry, unhappily for her, this poor Lady Dorothy Boyle. Horace Walpole and others agree about the softness and gentleness of her character, and the attraction of opposites—which may be an excellent provision of Nature in the main, but when it takes an ill turn is red-hot iron on our nerves—may have worked in both at the beginning. Of her affection, at least, there seems to be no doubt, and one wishes to believe it was that, and not the dukedom, which persuaded her parents. If worldliness it was in them, then worldliness has seldom been punished so savagely and so swiftly. Horace Walpole writes to his friend, Horace Mann: 'I wrote you word that Lord Euston is married; in a week more I believe I shall write you word that he is divorced. He is brutal enough, and has forbad Lady Burlington his house, and that in very ungentle terms. The whole family is in confusion; the Duke of Grafton half-dead, and Lord Burlington half-mad. The latter has challenged Lord Euston, who accepted the challenge, but they were prevented. . . . Do you not pity

the poor girl? of the softest temper, vast beauty, birth, and fortune! to be so sacrificed!'

In less than a year this soft, affectionate wife was dead of her husband's brutality. We read of her from time to time in the interval, meeting Horace Walpole here and there, dancing and supping, and on one occasion 'quite honey-moonish' with her husband—which shows us that the cleverest of social observers do not always observe. When she was dead her mother drew her picture and sent it among her friends with an inscription Pope was said to have written for her.

LADY DOROTHY BOYLE,
Born May the 14th, 1724.
She was the comfort and joy of her parents, the delight of all who knew her angelick temper, and the admiration of all who saw her beauty.
She was marry'd October the 10th, 1741, and delivered (by death) from misery
May the 2nd, 1742.
This picture was drawn seven weeks after her death (from memory) by her most affectionate mother,
Dorothy Burlington.

So Lady Burlington fell back on her art —for which she had a genuine taste;

Horace Walpole attributed the design of one of Hogarth's prints to her—on her art and her artistic protégés, and, let us hope, found consolation. It is some slight comfort to know that Lord Euston died young, in his father's lifetime.

It would be little reproach to human nature if this fate of her daughter had soured Lady Burlington's nature. Sour she appears in Walpole's letters, but he may have had some personal spite against her, since magnanimity does not shine among his virtues. He announces her death in 1758 in a spirit his best friends must deplore. 'You know that the wife of Bath' —Lord Bath's wealthy spouse—'is gone to maunder at St. Peter, and before he could hobble to the gate, my Lady Burlington, cursing and blaspheming, overtook t'other Countess, and both together made such an uproar . . .' Shocking bad taste, is it not?

One gathers the idea of a masterful woman who hated her foes and managed her friends. Such women are apt to be but poorly requited, for the foes return the hatred, and the friends may forget the kindness and staunchness while they remember



Mrs Garrick

the criticism and regiment. Lady Burlington had many favourites among artists, but the most famous, and I think interesting, of them is 'the Violetta.'

This fascinating dancer was one of that numerous band of foreigners who have taken London by storm, been petted by its society, and finally have had the kindness to settle in comfort among us—in spite of the climate and cold manners they have continued to reproach us withal. There seems to me to be some lack of balance in this matter, for we so seldom hear of English people taking other countries by storm and being furnished with comfortable livelihoods in them by their admirers. I mean, that it is almost unjust to themselves that other countries should export to us so much attractive humanity and leave us all our own as well. Mademoiselle Violette came to us in 1744, and was welcomed by Lady Burlington, who gave her quarters in Burlington House and took her everywhere.

Who was she? Mr. Joseph Knight, in his excellent book on David Garrick, says that probably she herself was in the dark as to her origin and early history. But

contemporary gossips, of course, had plenty of light. One obvious story was that she was Lord Burlington's natural daughter, and they said her mother was an Italian of position. And, of course, they said this was absolutely confirmed when on her marriage Lady Burlington settled £6000 on her, though the reasoning appears a little faulty in psychology. She always denied this origin, but according to 'Rainy Day Smith' she admitted, late in life, to one of her husband's relations that, although Lord Burlington was not her father, she was of noble birth. In that case she could not have approved of the other story the gossips had, which was that she was the daughter of a Viennese citizen called Veigel. Veigel = Veilchen = violet, and hence her name at the request, so they said, of Maria Teresa herself. The Empress admired her, and so, unfortunately, did the Emperor Frederick I., on which account she was packed off to England, travelling in male attire, and so seen on the packet by Dr. Carlyle. The latter part of this story, at least, the Violetta seems to have admitted. However these things were, and whether she came from

Florence or Vienna or elsewhere, she must have had, as Mr. Knight points out, some experience as a dancer, since she was engaged immediately for the Haymarket.

The King was present at her first performance, and she was soon the rage. She had the fine advertisement of a riot, when she gave an audience two dances instead of the three promised. 'The fame of the Violetta,' writes Horace Walpole in 1740, 'increases daily; the sister-countesses of Burlington and Thanet exert all their stores of sullen partiality in competition for her.' And two years later: 'The old monarch at Hanover has got a new mistress. . . . Now I talk of getting, Mr. Fox has got the ten thousand pound prize; and the Violetta, so it is said, Coventry for a husband. It is certain that at the fine masquerade he was following her, as she was under the Countess's arm, who, pulling off her glove, moved her wedding ring up and down her finger . . . which it seems was to signify that no other terms would be accepted.' I rather like this homely significance on the part of my Lady Burlington. The Coventry mentioned, by the way, is not the earl who

married the beautiful Maria Gunning, but plain Mr. Coventry, who was no great *parti*.

She did better when she married David Garrick in 1749. His wooing, however, had not been all roses, for Lady Burlington seems not to have approved him at first. Mr. Walpole writes to George Montagu that, at another entertainment, 'Lady Burlington brought the Violetta, and the Richmonds had asked Garrick, who stood ogling and sighing the whole time, while my Lady kept a most fierce look out.' But married they were, and it was a marriage of marriages. Garrick's lines on his wife are well known:

> 'Tis not, my friend, her speaking face,
> Her shape, her youth, her winning grace,
> Have reached my heart; the fair one's mind,
> Quick as her eyes, yet soft and kind—
> A gaiety with innocence,'

and other delightful qualities he enumerates. She seems really to have deserved the praise. Sir Theodore Martin, in his monograph on Garrick, has collected quite a bouquet of nice things said of her by famous men. To be praised — and cordially and sincerely praised—by Wilkes and Sterne and Gibbon, a woman must have been worth knowing.

We must be allowed to follow her for one moment into her married life, though she passes from Piccadilly after her honeymoon, which was partly spent in Burlington House.

Contemporaries were very hard on David Garrick's vanities and foibles. The moderns I have lately mentioned have defended him ably, and so, as was right and proper, has Mr. H. B. Irving. He had his share of the conceits and jealousies common in his vocation—and not unknown in others—but as a man there was more to respect in him than by ordinary standards we find in many great artists. And whatever virtue he lacked, in love and care for his wife he was not lacking. For twenty-eight years they were never a day apart. She went with him on his famous tour in Europe, and whatever and wherever his triumphs his wife enjoyed and sweetened them. We must not linger over them, but one last glance at Violetta we will have—in 1795, eighteen years after her husband's death. We see her thoroughly domesticated, in Horace Walpole's neighbourhood (having conciliated the regard of that exigent expert in society), with 'an hundred head of nieces

with her,' of whom, 'an elderly fat dame affected at every word to call her Aunt.' It is pleasant to chronicle a good fortune and domesticity so complete and so well deserved. And now we must go back to Burlington House.

It seems unkind to have lingered over Lady Burlington and her friendships and to say nothing of her lord, who was much considered by so many considerable men. He was a splendid host, housing Handel for three years, and William Kent, the architect, for thirty-two—a sort of hospitality I regret has become obsolete. But beyond his hospitality and his interest in art little emerges of personal quality, and we may let the sands of time run on. After his death Burlington House passed to the Cavendishes. Lord George of that family bought it from the current Duke in 1815, and lived there many years, latterly with the revived title of Burlington, and with his son-in-law, Lord Charles FitzRoy—thus establishing for the house a happier connection with the family from which poor Lady Dorothy had her atrocious husband. A daughter of Lord Charles remembers that in her girlhood at

Burlington House bloodhounds went loose in the court at nights,—terrific beasts, chained up by day. Lord George was a fine example of the taciturnity remarkable in the Cavendishes, and I take a charming story of him and his brother, the fifth Duke —famous for his calmness and as the husband of Georgiana — from the reminiscences of Sir Algernon West. They stopped for the night at an inn on their way north, and were shown into a room with three beds, one of which had its curtains drawn. Both brothers in turn went and looked into the curtained bed and chose another. Not a word they said until late in the next day as they continued their journey. Then at last: 'Did you see what was in that bed last night?' asked the Duke. 'Yes, brother,' said Lord George, and again they were silent. The bed had contained a corpse.

It was Lord George who made the Burlington Arcade, to prevent people from throwing things over his garden wall, and, as the *Gentleman's Magazine* rather curiously puts it, 'for the gratification of the publick, and to give employment to industrious females.' When I was a boy at college it

was the custom, if one went to London for the day, to take a turn in this Arcade, which, I am afraid, we called the 'drain-pipe,' of an afternoon, but I doubt no very gracious ghosts come out of it into Piccadilly.

I think there are no other personal memories about Burlington House. It was a great Whig centre at one time, but even ghosts cannot be in two places at once, and Devonshire House claims Fox and Burke far more insistently. We fall back on art again. The Elgin Marbles were once in a shed in the courtyard, and the pictures of Messrs. X, Y, and Z, with more distinguished artists, have hung regularly on its walls since the Royal Academy of Arts was housed there. Does the noise of past 'soirées,' interesting and miscellaneous, revive in the nights? Or the passions and rivalries and exclusions and tardy admissions which have made such a coil in its history—does the atmosphere of them hang about the house? Let us hope that the ghosts of dead banquets and stereotyped speeches walk not. But one likes to think of Disraeli lauding the pictures he had just been abusing to his neighbour, with a hypocritical humour Mr.

Gladstone thought 'devilish.' Hogarth caricatured the builder of the house. I wonder what he would have thought of its present possessors—mixed thoughts, it is probable.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PALMERSTONS AND CAMBRIDGE HOUSE

WALKING along Piccadilly with my reader, I stop him at No. 94, the Naval and Military, or 'In and Out' Club, and, pressing his arm with one emphatic hand, I point with t'other through the open gate across the courtyard to the plain stone house, and 'Here,' says I to him, 'here, reader, for fifteen years lived an Englishman and Englishwoman than whom you may search history through to find two examples more satisfying, more splendidly and completely true, of our national type. Other dwellers in Piccadilly may or may not impress you more acutely. There 's Emma Hart, and Byron, and Old Q., and the great Duke; there 's romance and passion, poetry and wickedness and military glory, matters in which from time to time we English have been great; but if you

would reflect to what fine pass the quite ordinary qualities of our countrymen may arrive, how noble a show may come of mere genial tempers and solid understandings, stand here in front of Cambridge House and muse on the Palmerstons.'

Before the reader does that, however, we must make our bow to chronology and attend a moment to Pam's predecessors in Cambridge House, of whom one was a great noble and another a royal duke—the third Earl of Egremont, to wit, and the Duke of Cambridge. The house was built for the Egremonts in 1760 or so, and had the honour, during the reign of the second Earl, of receiving John Wilkes after the arrest of that firebrand for No. 45 of the *North Briton*. He had been arrested by the Earl's order, and the interview, we may be sure, was lively. Wilkes wrote an energetic account of the business to the Duke of Grafton from Paris. But this is only a brief incident, and Wilkes's ugly face, which, as he said, was only half an hour's handicap in the rivalries of love, is but a flash on the canvas. With the third Lord Egremont we may stay longer. It is true that his name belongs

more to Petworth, that beautiful old place in Sussex, than to Piccadilly: it was there he lived almost entirely in his later life, practising that hospitality, at once casual, lordly, and kindly, for which he was renowned. But in his younger days he had been a leader of London fashion, and this house in Piccadilly knew him at intervals through most of his long life.

George O'Brien Wyndham, who was born in 1751 and died in 1837, was a type of what a great English noble, with fine taste, much intelligence, sincere public spirit, but little aptitude for party politics, can be in these latter days. Perhaps this does not amount to very much. Even in his time, and still more in ours, the position is something of an empty survival. 'Your nobles,' said the German professor to Harry Richmond, 'are merely rich men.' That may be nearly true, but it is not quite true. Enough flesh remains on the bones of a system that in its day was logical and efficient to make a wealthy noble potentially a more useful person than a bare representative of individualist success in making money. His direct beneficence—given our traditions—may be

easier and more graceful, and his example shines. Easy for him to be beneficent, but then, as it seems, it is easier still not to be. Lord Egremont, for instance, gave away £20,000 a year in charity. His income was £80,000 a year, and so of course he did not miss the money: the gift was less to him than if I gave away sixpence. Still, he gave it, and might not have given it, and many a richer man has been honoured for smaller gifts. He was a magnificent and helpful friend of painters, who were at home at Petworth, and whose works are now its distinction. In particular he cherished Turner. They agreed well, and naturally so, for there was in both the simplicity of life and of attitude to life which belongs to true art and true aristocracy. This simplicity shone at Petworth, where host and guests went their own way all day, and met at dinner, at which Lord Egremont in the cordial — if rather dilatory — old fashion carved for each guest himself. In one matter, indeed, he fell short of a model nobleman, though convention was not outraged by his conduct so much then as it would be now: he was an avowed father

without being a husband. He was not a rake; on the contrary, was an affectionately domestic man. His children lived with him, and inherited all but his title after him. Pity that circumstances left the relation short of complete fitness. His not marrying in early life made Horace Walpole describe him as a worthless young fellow. The fact was that he had been going to, but did not, marry Horace Walpole's niece. Pity, as I said, that in this matter he defied convention, but that he did so shows at least that his virtues of charity and kindness were his own, not assumed in compliance with it.

On the monument in Petworth church to his predecessors, the Percies, is the inscription *Mortuis morituras.* I hope that he thought of it; in any case he adopted it, and you may search wide for an inscription of a moral taste, so to say, so perfect and final. There was much to say of the Percies and himself, but in that place what was fitting to say was just that: they were dead and he would die. I would trust the feeling for art in a man who felt that propriety. Lord Egremont, however, would not have been a type of 'a great English noble' if the art of

painting and the cherishing of painters had been all his interests. He was not energetic in politics, though he was ready to back his views with his purse. But, to fill the popular ideal of his position (which takes little account of the arts) he was a good sportsman, and, above all, a splendid patron of the turf. Mr. Theodore Cook, in his delightful history of that great institution, has much to say of Lord Egremont. Take him all in all, then, he was a worthy possessor of a great Piccadilly house, and his name must be honoured as we stand before it.

The same may be said in a way of the royal duke who lived there afterwards (Lord Cholmondeley intervening) till 1850. The Duke of Cambridge was not conspicuous among the brothers of George the Fourth, who went the pace so merrily as young men, and were so eccentric, laughable, and on the whole amiable as old ones. He was not clever, which perhaps was just as well, since the Duke of Cumberland, who—with the slightly dubious exception of George himself—had the brains of that royal generation, was detested. All the stories of these royal dukes are of homely, innocent, individual

oddities, the amusement of their society, which had little of the reverence for royalty now so fashionable. Those of the Duke of Cambridge are not remarkable. The best of them are of his conduct in church, where he was accustomed to give a cordial and audible support to the officiating clergyman. 'Let us pray,' said the clergyman: 'By all means, by all means,' said the Duke of Cambridge. On one commandment his comment would be, 'Quite right, quite right; but very difficult sometimes,' and on another—I won't say which—'No, no; it was my brother Ernest did that.' Rather a dear old gentleman, he should not be omitted from a talk about the house which bears his name, but there is little to say of him.

And now we come to the Palmerstons. I join them in my gossip, even as they were so thoroughly joined in life, for both were splendid examples, as I said, of our ordinary national type at its best. It may be that the spirit of Palmerston's policy lives here and there among our politicians, but his actual politics is dead, is as a wind that has blown by, so that the figure of the man, as a man, is the greater part that is left of him,

and so his wife, as a woman, stands by his side in history, as in her way almost equally remarkable. The secret of both was in a vitality and cheerfulness that never so much as faltered. Hour after hour in the House of Commons the old man—he was old when he comes into the story of Piccadilly—could attend to the dullest business, patient, business-like, polite. Hour after hour at the famous receptions at Cambridge House, he could stand with a smile and kindly handshake for innumerable guests, repeating the handshake in forgetfulness now and then (it is recorded) as he grew older, but never flagging in cordiality. And so Lady Palmerston filled up her countless invitation cards with her own hand, and kept her visiting-book, says Abraham Hayward, 'as regularly as a merchant's ledger.' But the formal part was the least of her tasks: she had to please all the good, dull people when they came. 'Her good-nature,' says Hayward again—and the tribute of the eulogy he wrote of her in the *Times* at her death is great, for it came from a critical temper—'her good-nature was inexhaustible, nor was it ever known to give way under any extent

of forwardness or tiresomeness . . . instead of interrupting or abruptly quitting wearisome or pushing visitors, she would listen till they ceased of their own accord, or were superseded and went away.' All this must have been trying indeed to her. She was the daughter of a clever house—sister to Lord Melbourne—and had lived all her life in a lively, well-bred, and intimate society, a society which is most familiarly reflected, I think, in the letters of Harriet, Lady Granville. These are some of the best woman's letters in English, and they paint the best of the society which followed the generation of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, who was Lady Granville's mother : a society unaffected, conversible, given to jokes and games. To come from that to the entertaining of average Members of Parliament and their womenkind must have been a discipline much more severe than the rôle of an ambassador's wife in Paris, which greatly tried the patience of Lady Granville. Nor did Lady Palmerston care for politics, apart from personalities. She was her husband's invaluable ally, but only as another ear and mouth. When politics were brought to her,



Lady Palmerston

she made a careful note or sent at once for the great man. Devotion to him and his interests was all her inspiration, and a good heart, good wits, good manners, and—one is glad to know—good health and digestion, carried her through.

There had been stories about them—'old stories, my dear!'—in other days. She was the widow of Lord Cowper, and there was trouble about her second marriage. Palmerston was *volage* and gay, and was not (as a young man) called Cupid Palmerston for nothing. Her friends prophesied unhappiness. Lady Granville wrote: 'Lady Cowper has courage to face her angry children. I cannot say how much I blame them for telling what they feel, but I wonder she can encounter their antipathy. What a happy mother she might have been, and what an unhappy existence will she have, I fear! Her understanding never has been of the slightest use to her.' Well, well, the wisest of us are poor prophets. Her existence was most happy, and her understanding exceeding useful, and her children came dearly to love Lord Pam.

He was a lovable man. A hearty, un-

affected, easy, joyous man. Really a consummate type of good average qualities. Not interested in art or literature (which was easily forgiven him) but interested in almost everything else; a man of whom it was characteristic that he never passed a dish at table, and played a bad game of billiards with infinite zest—loving much to win, and especially if his wife were looking on. The affection of his countrymen generally was won by their rough appreciation of this simple nature perhaps almost as much as by their belief that he stood for England, and the rights and dignity of England, without compromise or exception. The respect and prestige he had in Parliament and among those who came in contact with him were founded, above all, on his absolute command of his business. He was like the late Lord Randolph Churchill in this, that being a pleasure-loving man, and having lived hard as a man of pleasure, when ambition sent him to business he gave himself wholly to it and lived hard as a man of business. He was something of a gourmet, yet when Parliament was sitting he dined at three, and but for some tea at

the House touched nothing more till he came home to bed at one o'clock. As a result, he knew what he was about when he rose to answer questions or make a speech, and he could express his knowledge lucidly and in that easy conversational tone which to Englishmen, and especially in the House, is most acceptable. Many an English statesman has been wrecked in public life from sheer inability to get on with his colleagues at close quarters: that, of course, was not the case with Palmerston, yet it is not true to say that the reverse was the case. People who are offended by downrightness and occasional *brusquerie*—timid and punctilious people like Lord John Russell—he scandalised. His success came not from any one quality, as was shrewdly remarked of him, but from an unusual combination of qualities—gaiety and sense, lucidity and fire—but he had the defects of those qualities too.

That reminds me that he had critics in private life, and that I have been straying to the House of Commons from Cambridge House. His jollity and fun and laughter could grate on the fastidious. Henry

Greville, for example, as fastidious, though not as articulate, a critic as his brother Charles, has recorded his exceptions. 'Although he was a most cordial and courteous host, he never struck me as an agreeable man; he was always good-humoured and ready to talk, but his style was too jocose, and his jests were for the most part flat, and one felt in his society a constant disappointment that the conversation of a man who was playing so important and conspicuous a part in the world, and who must necessarily have so much to communicate, should be made up of puns and bad jokes,' etc., etc. The idea crosses one's mind that possibly Pam had not 'much to communicate' to Mr. Henry Greville, and preferred to chaff him. Still, one knows too well that high spirits and empty jests—a mere expression of high spirits to the jester, like singing in his bath—may be a bore when one is not attuned to them, and no doubt Pam may so have sinned. I think, however, had I been there, that delight in an octogenarian vitality, in a humour and kindness which had survived so much toil, so many rows

in public, and so much zest of life in private, would have reconciled me to any number of puns and bad jokes.

Alas! I was not there. As I write of these ghosts in Piccadilly I strain my imagination to visualise them as they were. The help is all too little. Letters and diaries of contemporaries, however graphic and acute they may be, seem ever to leave out those simple, elementary things we seek. Familiar with appearances, and voices, and manners, they forget to describe them, or not having our interests in mind have no reason for the description. We are left guessing and inferring. Palmerston, too, perhaps, died too lately for his *vie intime* to be easily at our service. I get a picture or two of him at Cambridge House from Lord Lorne's (the present Duke of Argyll) book on him. One (sent to Lord Lorne by a correspondent) is of Palmerston in his workroom, standing at a high desk, 'almost unapproachable from the fortification of office boxes piled around him.' And then Lord Lorne, more careful than most biographers, gives us some details of his looks, and — yes — I can see him at the top of

the staircase in Cambridge House, shaking hands with his guests, an upstanding figure, neither short nor tall, very neatly dressed, the head erect on the shoulders, framed with grey, short hair, brushed forward, and grey whiskers, greyer close to the cheek—the hair was black and the face round when he was 'Cupid Palmerston.' He whispers to one man an account of a famous prize fight, which happened that day, not admitting that he was there, and greets another cordially for the second time, and I hear his jolly laugh as he repeats a bad pun to the disappointed Henry Greville.



Lord Palmerston

CHAPTER IX

105, 106, AND 107

I WONDER if my reader is fond of practical jokes. I hope not: I should not despise him for it—necessarily or altogether—but I should pity him, because they are almost passed out of our manners, and he will find but few, and with difficulty, to share his merriment. They were still rife a generation ago, especially in theatrical society, but now they are dead, and few of us in an age of nerves are sorry for their passing. For my part—nerves or no nerves—I dislike them extremely, because my mind craves lucidity and simple dealing, and hates mysticism and uncertainty and confusion and make-believe. If, however, the reader *should* be fond of practical jokes, he will be interested in the Lord Barrymore for whom 105 (now the Isthmian Club) was

built in 1780, on the site of one of those statuary yards (that of John Van Nost) which used to deface Piccadilly.

An agreeable family, the Barrys, of whom this gentleman was the head. Hellgate and Cripplegate (one brother was lame) were of their nicknames, and there was a sister whose mode of conversation caused the Regent to call her Billingsgate. They appear to have lived for the object of doing extravagant and eccentric things with the maximum of discomfort and annoyance to other people, and, of course, they were great devotees of the practical joke. Lord Barrymore, indeed, deserves to rank as the prince or patron saint of the custom. One finds mention of him from time to time in memoirs and letters; contemptuous mention, as a rule, and if laudatory, then a little parasitical. He was the sort of roystering, uncontrolled creature who fatigues his equals, and whose friends are apt to be parasites. Henry Angelo, the famous fencing-master, is, I think, the chief authority for the practical jokes, and on him the mark of the parasite is pretty clear. Most of the jokes were enacted at Wargrave, but no doubt the

house in Piccadilly must have seen a good many. One or two were rather amusing. To ask a respectable tradesman to your house as your guest and then make your other guests greet him as somebody else, and insist that he is somebody else, until you yourself say you don't know what to think, is not the perfection of hospitality, but one can imagine that the confusion of the victim might be entertaining. As a rule, however, I find the stories merely tedious, my boredom relieved only by dislike of the jokers and sympathy with the jokees. Barrymore and his brothers and friends and parasites called themselves the Humbugging Club and invited people to be humbugged.

'I see no worth in the hob-nailed mirth,'

but, if the reader does, I refer him to *The Last Earls of Barrymore*, by Mr. J. R. Robinson, where he will find all about it.

Lord Barrymore, however, was more than a mere practical-joking buffoon. He was distinguished as a gambler with cards and horses, and in the twenty-four years of his life got through £300,000. Remembering his age, poor boy, perhaps I was wrong to be superior about his practical jokes. The

one really interesting thing about him is that he was one of the first, if not the first, of our aristocracy to act in public. His enthusiasm for the stage, like all genuine enthusiasms, should be noted with respect. He built a theatre next to his house at Wargrave, and made up mixed companies of amateurs and professional players. But he by no means confined his histrionic gifts—which seem really to have existed—to his private theatre. George Selwyn writes, rather testily, of 'that *étourdi* Lord Barrymore playing the fool in three or four different characters upon our Richmond theatre.' There is a print of him as 'Scrub,' a black-a-vised, impish-faced young fellow with bushy eyebrows. Just before his death he went into the Berkshire Militia—for another diversion, or to begin a reform, I know not—and was becoming a zealous and efficient officer when a gunshot accident finished him. More than one young man of his class has run much the same course in our time. We may deplore the end of him or not, remembering that profligates sometimes settle into happiness, and also that pigeons sometimes turn into ineffectual rooks. On

the whole it is fitting, I think, that such boys should never grow old. The revenge of such a youth is most often painful to endure and ugly to see.

As for 105 Piccadilly, it was dismantled in 1792 and sold by auction, with the stables, where was room for twenty-one horses and two coach-houses. Mr. Christie knocked down house and stables (for 3050 and 1300 guineas) to the representative of Old Q., who had known better than to die at twenty-four. Old Q. left the house to Lady Hertford, but we find it, after being burnt and repaired, as the 'Old Pulteney Hotel.' And as such it was witness of an intrigue among 'exalted personages' in 1814. This is to be found in the *Recollections from* 1803 *to* 1837, which were given to a not much interested world by the Honourable Amelia Murray in 1868. It is rather an insipid little work, to be sure, but this story of the Pulteney Hotel—which she does not name, but it is identified by Mr. Wheatley—suggests a plot, and a plot attracts most of us. In 1814 London was simply swarming with potentates and their relations, and among them were Prince Leopold of Coburg, the Prince

of Orange, the Czar of Russia and his sister, the Grand Duchess Catherine of Oldenburg. Now the Princess Charlotte of Wales was engaged to the Prince of Orange, but the Duchess of Oldenburg, for political reasons, wished the marriage not to take place, but contrariwise that the Prince of Orange should marry a sister of her own, and the Princess Charlotte should marry Prince Leopold of Coburg. Poor Princess Charlotte! an avowed sentimentalist cannot but lament her in passing. To be the child of parents both deplorable in their different ways, who loathed one another and tore her between them; to be the centre of these miserable intrigues; to be withal an amiable and high-spirited girl, on whom England, even the Whigs—you remember Byron's lines—looked with some affection and hope when she should be queen; to gain a little happiness, and to die painfully after so brief a spell of it—assuredly it was a pathetic fortune. Well, the Prince of Orange was not 'particularly attractive,' says Miss Murray—it was indeed common rumour that the Princess disliked him—and Prince Leopold was 'a handsome young man.' The Duchess deter-

mined to aid these favourable circumstances with a little art. 'She took a hotel in Piccadilly,' our Pulteney Hotel, to wit, 'she earnestly sought the acquaintance of Miss Elphinstone, who was known to be on intimate terms with the Princess. She gave grand dinners, and took care to invite the Prince of Orange the night he was to waltz in public with the Princess, as her fiancé. The Grand Duchess plied him well with champagne, and a young man could hardly refuse the invitations of his hostess; he was made tipsy, and of course the Princess was disgusted. Then, in Miss Elphinstone's apartments, the charming Prince Leopold was presented.' And so this delicate scheme was accomplished.

Number 105 has something better in its history than Lord Barrymore's practical jokes and the Duchess of Oldenburg's champagne, for when it became a private house again the Lord Hertford who made the great collection lived there for some time and kept there his beautiful possessions. Sir Julian Goldsmid was its last private tenant, a figure of respectability to balance its first owner.

Number 106 narrowly missed being a most interesting house. It might have harboured, but for an untimely death, one of the most famous beauties in the social history of England, and so have given to the history of Piccadilly a pendant to Lady Hamilton. It, or rather its site, was originally an inn called 'The Greyhound,' and was bought by the sixth Earl of Coventry from Sir Hugh Hunlock in 1764 for ten thousand guineas with a yearly ground-rent of seventy-five pounds. He bought it soon after his marriage. But, alas and alas! this was his second marriage and not his first, which had been to Maria Gunning. For once I chafe against the limitations of my theme. There is so much that is interesting, amusing, pathetic to be written of the Gunnings, those Irish girls who by sheer force of beauty —for it seems they had neither wit nor manners—sent all London mad about them, caused people to crowd and stand on chairs to have a glimpse of them, and had their choice of coronets and fortunes. What unobservant fool first called the English cold and phlegmatic? In what other country of Western civilisation have mere good looks

brought such splendour to their possessors? and why, why did neither Gunning live in Piccadilly? I would rather have written about Elizabeth, who married duke after duke, and according to her grandson, the late Duke of Argyll, was a woman of courage and character. But I should have been content to write about Maria, Countess of Coventry only, and only a beautiful, foolish, ignorant, good-natured creature, whom Horace Walpole laughed at and rather liked. George Selwyn was devoted to her and to her daughters; for George, a passionately paternal man who was never a father, seems always to have loved his friends' children more than his friends. As it is, however, I must write of neither.

The actual Lady Coventry who lived at 106 may or may not have been an interesting person: we do not know. Miss Mary Townshend wrote to Selwyn: 'The beauty of the new countess was for some days set above that of your old friend, and at present, with equal injustice, she is scarcely allowed to be pretty.' If her portrait by Sir Joshua was like her, I fear I should have inclined to the latter verdict. Pretty or not, I can

only dislike her for not being Maria. Lord Coventry himself seems to have been no great matter. Horace Walpole hated him for some reason or other, and is severe on his character and intelligence. He was remarkable for *gaucherie* in Paris, it would appear, but probably, like many another good Englishman, he was only struggling with the French language. We have a picture of him, also in Horace, chasing his wife (Maria) round a dinner-table to rub off the rouge he accused her of wearing; but I do not object to people romping, so they do not bump against me, so much as did Horace. *Et voilà pour* the sixth Lord Coventry, who probably was just an ordinary fool.

The history of 106 is at least varied. From an inn it became a 'nobleman's mansion,' as we have seen, and then it was turned into a gambling club. This was the 'Coventry House Club,' an attempt to revive the glories and profits of Crockford's: happily or unhappily, it was not a success, and came to an end in 1854. After that 106 was for a short time the residence of the French Ambassador, and now, of course,



Madame de Flahault

it still has a diplomatic atmosphere about it as the St. James's Club.

The Comte de Flahault, French Ambassador here in 1860, was a man of distinction, a handsome and attractive man. He began life as aide-de-camp to the first Napoleon, and ended it as Chancellor of the Legion of Honour. It is his wife, however, who comes naturally into these pages, who may be supposed to have come to Piccadilly with joy and to have quitted it with regret. She was a Scotswoman, Margaret Mercer, who became Baroness Keith in her own right, and afterwards Baroness Nairne. Rather a superfluity of titles: she had to sign herself M. M. de Flahault, K. N., and Harriet, Lady Granville, who lived much with her in Paris, calls her in her letters indifferently Meg, Mercer, Madame de Flahault, and Lady Keith. Called by whatever name, she was, if not a sweet woman, a clever, sincere, and staunch one, and it is perhaps one of the many pities of Byron's life that he did not marry her. Idle to guess, no doubt, and it may not have been in Byron's character to live happily with any wife. Yet I think it is one's experience of life that

where two poor human things who must live together obviously exasperate one another, the trouble comes not of any glaring fault of character or conduct on this side or that so often as from some subtle opposition of view or temper beyond recognition and analysis. Miss Mercer (as she was then) and Byron might not have agreed together as he, too late, thought they would have, but there was the chance. In any case, there was a time when the world gave them to one another, and the lady, it seems, would not have refused. She was one of the few who stood by him when the world took his separation from his wife so indignantly. There is a story that at Lady Jersey's, when the other women drew back their skirts—those virtuous skirts of 1816!—to avoid touching him, she said, 'You ought to have married me.' It is certain that when he took ship at Dover he turned to Scrope Davies and gave him a little parcel for Miss Mercer, and said, 'Tell her that if I had been fortunate enough to marry a woman like her, I should not now be obliged to exile myself from my country.' I wonder: certainly she was a woman of kindness and spirit.

These qualities are well attested by Harriet, Lady Granville, whose long periods as ambassadress in Paris led to an intimacy with her countrywoman. A bond between them must have been a secret dislike—or expressed only to their friends at home—of the French society of the Restoration, and afterwards of the Louis Philippe régime, in which they lived perforce. One is so used to hearing the manners of English people sharply criticised by foreigners—who like to take this odd method of showing the excellence of their own—that it refreshes one to find in Lady Granville's correspondence the tables turned. I take it, her authority is unquestionable. She was a most popular and successful ambassadress, and cannot have written out of pique; and her good-nature, the kindly humour she had for all, or very nearly all, her acquaintance is evident on every page. But she could not abide the airs and rudenesses of French aristocracy in those periods, and gives instances of atrocities which more than justify her. One of these concerns Madame de Flahault. 'I think Lady Keith,' she writes, 'is more popular than she was, and

she deserves to be so, for she is very civil and very sensible, and is always delighted to open her house; but her manner is hard, and the French part of the society evidently go to see Flahault and not her. Some of the pretty women treat her with a neglect that makes my blood boil. The other evening I went there to a small soirée of about a dozen people. One of these impertinent women came, shook hands with Flahault, came straight up to me with a profound curtsey and pretty speech, and then sat down with her back turned to Margaret. It was so marked that she had the good sense to burst into a loud laugh, which made the woman turn round and apologise, during which Margaret nodded to me as much as to say, "You see now all I told you is true." I think Madame Boni de Castellane felt ashamed of herself.' Flahault did much to atone for the *bêtises* of his countrywomen. 'He pays her the greatest attentions, and left many an anxious sufferer after dinner yesterday to go and sit two hours with her,' when she was ill. Still one cannot doubt she was glad to be among her old friends again when she came to 106 Piccadilly,

though I fear many of them must have been dead by then. Lady Granville describes her in 1842 (she had lost a child) as 'much softened in manner, very much subdued in spirits, very agreeable, and a handsome woman, the asperity of her countenance gone, and the finest teeth in the world.' So we can imagine her fairly well at 106 Piccadilly, a shrewd, sensible woman, as I take it, with a touch of *brusquerie* probably —a Scotswoman of the rather severe type, contrasted effectively with a very lively and engaging French husband, perpetually young. I wish she had lived forty years earlier at 139 with Byron.

The last of this trinity, 107, I would had all the romantic and glorious associations of Piccadilly in itself. For, reader, it happens now to be a club, to which I have most resorted these dozen years and more. Associations are being made for it, doubt you not, and have been since the club was there: perhaps if my reminiscences are published in the middle of this century you shall read of them. Meanwhile, all there is to say of the house is that it has a delightful association with Lord Rosebery, since it

was a present to him on his marriage from his father-in-law, Baron Meyer de Rothschild, and that otherwise it is connected wholly with that great family. Shall I try my hand at the romance of money? Well, I confess I find the humanity of the subject a thought too difficult. Nathan Meyer Rothschild, for example, who was the third son of the founder, and who lived at 107 till his death in 1836, was the sort of man whom a previous generation held up to the reverence and imitation of the young. He was entirely engrossed in making money. He told Spohr that the only music *he* cared for was the rattle of money. He also said (if I remember rightly) that he could not afford to know an unlucky man. That he had the humour to say 'take two chairs' to a self-important visitor is to his credit, but I am not disposed at the moment to write an 'appreciation' of him.



The Duke of Wellington

CHAPTER X

THE GREAT DUKE

My concern with the Duke of Wellington is not as he moved in battle or the council-chamber, but in drawing-rooms and dining-rooms and the public street; as he appeared to his friends and others who sought him in Apsley House, or to the world at large as he rode or walked in Piccadilly; I am concerned to picture him, if I may, in his habit as he lived familiarly. Even so, I might well be fearful that the range of my local theme had brought me to a point where I had best make a silent reverence and pass on. The weight of so forceful a tradition as this lies heavy on one still. This man has stood to England as a very incarnation of eminence and greatness, and in truth he was, in character as in achieve-

ment, emphatically and beyond question a great man.

> 'O civic muse, to such a name,
> To such a name for ages long,
> To such a name,
> Preserve a broad approach of fame,
> And ever-echoing avenues of song.'

But who am I that I should gossip of him in conversational prose? Well, he comes into the subject I have chosen, and would have been the last man living to be patient with me if I stand niggling before it. I can say that whether or no I interest my readers in my view, at least I am profoundly interested myself.

One word of the background. The first-known occupant of the site of Apsley House was, appropriately enough, an old soldier named Allen, to whom (so tradition goes) George the Second gave a piece of ground at Hyde Park Corner, having recognised him as an old acquaintance of Dettingen, of which battle George was not unreasonably proud. Allen's wife kept a stall here, and when Lord Chancellor Apsley, afterwards Lord Bathurst, started building in 1771

(from designs by the Adams) she brought an action against him, and forced him to compensate her handsomely. It was unkindly said to be a suit between two old women. That is all the pre-Wellington history of Apsley House. The Duke enlarged it, and cased the old house, which was of red brick, with Bath stone. I will not cavil at his taste: it was characteristic of him to be enchanted with his possessions, and his opinion of this result was extremely high. At anyrate he could hardly have had his dwelling on a more delightful spot, parked on two sides, and in his day with a much more open run than now to Kensington. 'Number 1, London,' was then an appropriate description of it.

Let us first look hard at the Duke in the mind's eye. Happily in this case the light is good, for we have portraits and minute descriptions, and the memory of living men. The late Duke of Argyll, who went to call on him at Apsley House in 1847, tells us that 'what struck one most in his appearance was not his high aquiline nose, which is so prominent in all the pictures, but his splendid eyes. They were blue in colour,

and very round and very large . . . the eyelids cutting across them very high up, but not leaving them uncovered. They arrested all one's attention in a moment. One thought no more of the beaky nose, or of the small and firm mouth. . . .' I do not remember any other description that insists so exclusively on his eyes, but with a copy of the engraving after Lawrence before me as I write I can well believe in it. Splendid, forthright, well-opened eyes they are, with the fine prominence of their own quality, not at all protruding. 'Blue,' simply says the Duke of Argyll; 'a dark violet blue or grey,' says Mr. Gleig, his biographer: exact agreement about eyes is rare to find, but a deep blue we may take them to have been. Then, of course, there is the aquiline nose: 'beaky,' even too beaky, on a mean face, but merely giving point and command to his. The eyebrows straight and thick, but not bushy; the forehead almost low, but broad and square; the mouth small, a little tight at the corners; the jaw strong, the chin prominent and firm. A grave expression habitually, a winning smile on occasion. He was five feet nine inches

high, very erect, at least until his latter years, when observers differ: probably he bore himself like a soldier still by instinct, and drooped in inattention. He was broad-shouldered and deep-chested, with finely made hands and feet.

Then you must regard his dress. Probably Thackeray—in *Pendennis*, you remember, when he stops to speak to the Major walking with Pen—describes him as he was most familiar to Londoners, 'in a blue frock-coat and spotless white duck trousers, in a white stock, with a shining buckle behind.' Mr. Gleig adds to this, as his civilian dress in summer, a low-crowned, narrow-brimmed hat, and a white waistcoat. In winter the hat and stock and frock-coat remained the same, but the trousers were blue, and blue or red the waistcoat. Sir William Fraser tells us that the hat had a very clean lining of pale yellow leather: I like to think of Sir William taking it up in the hall and making his note on it. He confuses us a little about the trousers—surely this does not bore you?—with the statement that they were of 'Oxford mixture,' except on the first of May, when they

were white: I believe he is wrong, but forgive him for the knowledge that the Duke always carried two cambric pocket-handkerchiefs. . . . You are watching the Duke in Piccadilly, and you are to add to your observation the curiosity and deep respect with which all his fellow-citizens regarded him in passing. Pen, for example, on the occasion I have quoted, was in ecstasy over the encounter. 'The Duke gave the elder Pendennis a finger of a pipe-clayed glove to shake, which the Major embraced with great veneration; and all Pen's blood tingled, as he found himself in actual communication, as it were, with this famous man (for Pen had possession of the Major's left arm, whilst that gentleman's other wing was engaged with his Grace's right), and he wished all Grey Friars School, all Oxbridge University, all Paternoster Row and the Temple, and Laura and his mother at Fairoaks, could be standing on each side of the street, to see the meeting between him and his uncle, and the most famous duke in Christendom.' A friend of mine remembers seeing the Duke in 1851, the year of the exhibition, and the year before his death, cantering along Picca-

dilly on a small white cob, upright in the saddle, with his cane held to his hat in salute, and the people uncovering as to royalty.

Even the late Duke of Argyll felt diffident and nervous when, as a young man, he went to ask a favour of the venerable hero. He takes us with him, by the way, into Apsley House, into 'a large room on the ground floor, to the eastern side of the Piccadilly front. It was full of articles in much confusion—of writing-tables with blue-books, of articles of clothing hung on screens, and of furniture with no definite arrangement. The Duke presently entered by a side door. . . .'

And what manner of man, truly and intimately, was it behind the white stock and the blue frock-coat? Had we been present invisible at this interview, we should have heard him putting his nervous visitor at ease, giving sound advice on the matter in question, readily promising his aid. Yes; but the Duke of Argyll was of his own class and society. It is certain that he lived, by choice, almost exclusively in that class. Even his biographer—Mr. Gleig again—

admits that 'the circle in which he chiefly moved was that of fashionable ladies and gentlemen, who pressed themselves upon him.' It is said that he liked their flattery, which is true to some extent, no doubt, and it is hinted that he was something approaching to a snob, which is ridiculous. He was born in that class, he had a strong sense of caste, which in his time was a reality, and he was most at home in it: that is all. But it is curious to note the different reports of him from those in and outside it. When we have allowed for the immense prestige of him from Waterloo onwards, we still must think there was something of superficial coldness and aloofness in his personality to leave so much awe in the minds of those who merely spoke with him, as it were, at a distance. And then turn for contrast to his letters to 'Dearest Georgy'—the late Lady de Ros, who died a nonagenarian, and was one of his girl-favourites—about the romping at Mont St. Martin, the men harnessed and dragging the ladies about on rugs: 'The night before, the ladies drew me the *petty* tour, and afterwards Lord Hill the *grand* tour, but the "fat, fair, and forty" and M.

were so knocked up that some of us were obliged to go into the harness, although we had already run many stages.' Or follow him through Lady Granville's letters: 'the Duke as merry as a grig,' 'the *bonhomie* and adorable qualities of the Duke,' the Duke acting in charades, or 'the poor Beau,' his significant nickname, 'is much hurried, being considered to go along with favours and cakes when a Tory marries,' and so forth. And then my mind goes back to Haydon's account of him at Walmer, reading the paper after dinner, while the painter sat gazing at his grey head in silent reverence, admiring him as something near divine.

Again: the popular tradition of him, much supported by evidence, is of a stern man, something hard, curt, a foe to emotion. Even some of those who knew him more or less familiarly report him blunt, matter-of-fact, and if not unfeeling, certainly this side sensibility. There is Thomas Creevey's interview with him in Brussels, immediately after Waterloo. 'He made a variety of observations in his short, natural, blunt way, but with the greatest gravity all the time, and without the least approach to

anything like triumph or joy. "It has been a damned serious business," he said. "Blucher and I have lost 30,000 men. It has been a damned nice thing—the nearest run thing you ever saw in your life. . . . By God! I don't think it would have done if I had not been there."' That is not exactly unfeeling, and it is thoroughly of his nation and class in its sporting metaphor and its plain statement. One admires the absence of personal triumphing on the one side, of false modesty on the other. But one misses the imaginative feeling for the horror of all that slaughter. Well, it merely was not for Mr. Creevey. We know from Raikes that when, at this same time, the Duke went to the rooms of his niece, Lady FitzRoy Somerset, he burst into a flood of tears. When Mrs. Arbuthnot, his most intimate friend among women, died, he was called unfeeling because, as Charles Greville says, 'he had the good taste and sense to smooth his brow and go to the House of Lords with a cheerful aspect.' But we know how he could feel the death of a friend: he who sat with the tears streaming down his cheeks at the funeral service for Arbuthnot.

We know, too, from Gleig how, when that friend's fatal illness was told to him, he seized the doctor's hand and protested brokenly, 'No, no; he's not very ill, not very bad—he'll get better, he'll not die.'

One remembers these and many stories like them, and one looks at the portrait and one sees surely that those eyes and that mouth are not of an unfeeling man. Very greatly otherwise. It is no wild guess that this was a man who felt both strongly and readily; and, living in high places with curious eyes ever on him, had the habit of cloaking his feelings as best he might. Many appeals to feeling were not for him, of course. He was blind to art and books. Also—that, too, is in the eyes—he was proud and by nature contemptuous of what to him was little. Those were intellectual limitations to feeling: when the passage was clear there was no hard substance of nature to check it.

And if one thinks of his pride of class, of his contempt for the mob, one should remember some facts about him and it. All his life he had done his duty to his country single-heartedly, with immense personal

success, to be sure, but also with much hardship and strain of energies, and in the teeth of calumny. In 1831 he was honestly opposed to reform. The King was to dissolve Parliament, but the Duke could not go to the House of Lords because his wife was dying in Apsley House. She died as the guns in the Park began to fire. And presently came a yelling crowd before Apsley House, and in a while stones crashing through the windows, breaking them in pieces and destroying pictures within. What wonder that he kept the iron shutters to his windows to the day of his death? Twelve years later an immense mob, cheering this time, followed him up Constitution Hill. The Duke took no notice whatever, but trotted leisurely to Apsley House: then he stopped at the gate, pointed to those iron shutters, bowed to the mob, and silently rode into the court. He was not a democratic politician.

Remember also that if he despised the common man, he was punctiliously courteous to him. No great man ever took so much trouble about small men as he. Those innumerable autograph letters beginning 'F.M.

the Duke of Wellington presents his compliments to ' Mr. Buggins, or Master Brown, or what not! His peculiar humour, half playful, half grim, no doubt made him sometimes rejoice in his answers. 'Field-marshal the Duke of Wellington has received a letter from Mr. Tomkins, stating that the Marquess of Douro is in debt to his mother, Mrs. Tomkins. The Duke of Wellington is not the Marquess of Douro. The Duke regrets to find that his eldest son has not paid his washerwoman's bill. Mrs. Tomkins has no claim upon the Duke of Wellington. The Duke recommends her, failing another application, to place the matter in the hands of a respectable solicitor.' In this case he was hoaxed: Mr. Tomkins, the distressed washerwoman's son, was a collector of autographs. And of course he was often hoaxed over his charities, which were large and incessant: he admitted once that an officer of the Mendicity Society had given him the severest scolding he had ever had in his life.

If he despised common people, he never pandered to great personages. It was to the credit of George the Fourth that he always had a great respect for the Duke, whom he

called 'Arthur'; it is not much to the discredit of the Duke that he had little or no respect for George the Fourth, of whom he once told Creevey—condemning the Regent's bulk and blasphemy in pretty forcible language of his own—that he was ashamed to enter a room with him. And he told Lady de Ros that when George and Charles the Tenth were together, George, with 'his flourish and display, might have passed for his valet.' I must not repeat stories at large, but, if the reader has not heard it, this one —it is irrelevant, I know—helps to fix the Duke's manner and humour: 'Were you surprised at Waterloo, Duke?' asked some fool at a dinner. 'No,' with his charming smile, 'but I am now.'

And now I come to what, after all, is most to the purpose in my sketch of the Duke in his social side—his relation with women. He was susceptible, as it used to be called, in an extreme degree; and, like most susceptible people, he was inconstant. His marriage was finely characteristic. The lady's family disapproved of the engagement, and he, serving abroad, had not seen her for years. She suffered disfigurement from the smallpox, and

wrote to release him. Whatever the sentimental traditions of romance might require, I fancy that most men, given the circumstances, would have acquiesced in their freedom. But, though another person might release Arthur Wellesley from a promise, he could not release himself; he returned to England and married the lady, and they lived unhappily, more or less, ever after. I hope that this conduct may balance, in my moralising reader's mind, something at least of conduct he will condemn. I believe that most of the Duke's intimacies with women were 'innocent'; he was soft about them, was amused by them, liked to indulge them. But there is no use in pretending that he thought much of chastity, or that his life was chaste. We will not pursue an argument which might annoy the reader, and to me would be stupid and tiresome. As we study great men of the active and commanding sort in history, we find that most of them seem not to have been naturally monogamous; if we must judge, we should judge comparatively; our modern habit of reticence and silence has induced a false perspective: that is all I feel disposed to say. The great

Duke got himself into little scrapes, no doubt whatever. He never escaped the consequences of a fault by committing what he would have considered a greater one. We know the famous answer to the threat of exposure: 'Publish, and be damned!'

In the year 1825 there were published the memoirs of Harriet Wilson, a celebrated courtesan. Walter Scott notes the occurrence in his journal, and says it had 'kept the gay world in hot water.' He recollects having met Miss Wilson, and congratulates himself that her memory was not so good as his. It is, I must confess, a most amusing book, written really, I suppose, by some hack of letters from Harriet's confidences and suggestions, but its attempts at pathos and sentiment are exceedingly nauseous. The Duke figures largely in it. In 1816 Lady Frances Webster, Byron's old friend, was accused by one, Baldwin, of misconduct with the Duke; she prosecuted for libel, and got £2000 damages, but I fear the world must have smiled. There were other scrapes, but I am sure it was softness and kindness, not libertinism, which most often involved him. Lady Caroline Lamb, also

Byron's old friend, set her cap at him in 1815. 'Nothing is *agissant*,' writes Lady Granville from Paris, 'but Caroline William in a purple riding habit, tormenting everybody, but I am convinced ready primed for an attack upon the Duke of Wellington, and I have no doubt but that she will to a certain extent succeed, as no dose of flattery is too strong for him to swallow or her to administer.' There it was, you see: he had this reputation for softness and accessibility to women. Once, when he left Woburn prematurely, on the plea of Cabinet business in London, the indignant Duchess of Bedford wrote after him: 'Dear Duke,—For Cabinet read boudoir.—Yours, G. B.' Yes; I fear he had this reputation. Charles Greville, who knew him well, and whose brother Algernon was his secretary for thirty-five years, writing about his intimacy with Madame Grassini, adds that 'these habits of female intimacy and gossip led him to take a great interest in a thousand petty affairs, in which he delighted to be mixed up and consulted.' A pity, perhaps, that he so wasted valuable time, but I do not think there was much harm in it all.

And what return did women make him for all this interest and devotion? One of low degree made 'copy' out of him, as we have seen. Another, of high degree, according to Sir William Fraser—but then Sir William was wrong about the trousers—threatened him with an action. But on the good side? 'I suppose, Duke,' said a woman to him once, 'you have inspired a great deal of admiration and enthusiasm among women during your life?' 'Oh, yes, plenty of that! plenty of that! But no woman ever loved me: never in my whole life.' It is a sad commentary on all the stories and scandals. Likely as not, he spoke the truth. For the Duke's nature was above all things masculine, one of which that very softness about women is an indication; and masculine men, when they achieve great things before the world, have, as he said, admiration and enthusiasm from women in plenty: but women are fond of men most commonly, as I believe, for weaknesses they understand and share. I may be wrong, and I rather fear to pursue the analysis; let us hope the Duke was deceived. 'I was the only thing he ever

loved,' said the complacent Lady Jersey after his death. Let us hope that somewhere or other lived a woman who might have said the converse.

So we see the great Duke as he was for his chosen friends, gay, affectionate, generous, loving a simple joke, loving flattery a little overmuch, loving women a few too many. We may fancy him in his dining-room at Apsley House, courteous, talking freely, without the least preoccupation with his own reputation or position, downright, prejudiced, and, to the best of his understanding, just. We may follow him in his daily habits, methodical, simple, temperate, and withal hearty. We may imagine him with strangers and slight acquaintances, punctilious, humorous, a little oddly blunt and grim at times. And, thanks to painted and written records, we see him vividly all the time. And so we part with him, but Piccadilly has a memory of him other than of the living man: a great memory of one of the two great funeral processions of our time: a vast and reverent crowd, the strains of the Dead March, and, more solemn than all else, the silent tramp, tramp of his soldiers.

CHAPTER XI

EMMA HAMILTON

FROM the Duke, it is natural to pass to our greatest sailor. He himself, to be sure, has little part in London. For our memories his place is on the sea, almost wholly; away from the sea he bore no such part in our life as Wellington bore, nor could he have borne it had he lived after Trafalgar. For our national purpose, so to say, he had his great intellectual gift of consummate seamanship, his great moral gift of devotion to his country, but he can never stand for such a rounded type of Englishman as stands the Duke. The men had one thing in common, that both were quickly emotional; but Wellington was the lord of his emotion, and Nelson was the slave of his. The only occasion of their meeting, when Nelson exposed the childlike boastfulness which



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY EMERY WALKER

Lady Hamilton.

was a weak if amiable side of him to the Duke's grim observation, is sad to think on, but not surprising. The greatest of our sailors could never have played a great part in the broad world of affairs. For us his place is on the sea. And if his spirit might be supposed to seek the land, it would hardly seek Piccadilly: it would go, of course, to that peaceful Merton where he longed to rest.

But with his Emma it is otherwise. The bustle of Piccadilly may well be imagined congenial to her. Of her life in England, after all, this was the most active and interesting part, so far as social things went, and Emma loved social things. Here, too, she gave birth to Horatia. I think she must be supposed to visit Piccadilly—I don't think the traffic would prevent her at all—and so I write of her. And, writing of her, I must perforce write of Nelson.

I really cannot admit that there is any reasonable doubt of Emma Hamilton's character. Men have sometimes written of her as though she were a problem like Mary Queen of Scots—of whom also, by the way, I have quite a definite view. Mr. Walter

Sichel, for example, to whose copiously informed book I am greatly indebted, writes with a fine air of defending a much wronged woman. He seems to tilt, lance in rest, in her defence, like some champion of legendary chivalry. I admire the attitude, but I cannot induce my old bones to adopt it. I remember (with no disrespect to Mr. Sichel) what Thackeray said, in another connection, of the defence of Nell Gwynne made by her footman, that after all 'the jade was indefensible, and it is pretty certain her servant knew it.' Not that Emma was a courtesan, or anything like it. She was the mistress of two men in her youth, and after her marriage became the mistress of another. Poverty in the early cases, passion in the other, may or may not be held a sufficient excuse. For my part, I do not care. I am far from agreeing with Dr. Johnson, who assured the chivalrous Bozzy, pleading extenuating circumstances for some other lady, 'the woman's a'—so-and-so—'and there's an end of it.' There is not an end of it. It is a narrow view, an unprofitable exaggeration of a part into the whole. Still, one can hardly say that on her record Emma

is one's idea of a fine character. Putting common frailty aside, one does not find in her any clearly noble qualities of heart or head. She was a warm, generous, kindly creature, loving to have dependants, but loving also to cherish them, loyal, courageous. She was clever and appreciative. But, the gods be praised, there are hundreds of thousands such women whose conduct is defensible as well. On the other hand, she was vain and vain-glorious, a little intoxicated with her power as the wife of an ambassador, the friend of a Queen—though it was but the Queen of Naples—and the love of a hero. It was a strange fate that turned a serving-wench into all this, but happily for the colour of life in all ages such fates have waited from time to time on beauty with no very wonderful qualities to aid it.

Such as she was, you must imagine her at the beginning of 1801, soon after her return from Naples, setting up house with her husband at what was then 23 Piccadilly —a small house between the Savile Club and Down Street. You imagine her, of course, a very beautiful woman. How

many portraits of her have you seen? A host by Romney, no doubt. To my mind the most sympathetic of these are those he did of her in youth, and in a simple mood. There is a reproduction in Mr. Sichel's book of a sepia study, done in 1784, which shows one a girl of compelling loveliness and grace. I could have fallen in love with her as she sat for it more easily than with Sir Joshua's 'Bacchante,' though that perhaps is the most beautiful picture of her we have. In 1801 she was thirty-six, a very beautiful woman still, but started on the road to corpulence—that sad journey so many beautiful women must take. Second-rate painters often give good likenesses, and I dare say Masquerier's portrait of her at this time shows her much as she was—with large eyes and fine features and a mass of hair grown darker since her youth, rather heavy withal, and with something of a Jewish look about her. Graceful she remained, almost perfectly so, I do not doubt. You imagine her bustling about her new abode, arranging the furniture she had sold jewels to buy—in comparative wealth or in poverty, Emma was always hard up—and singing as she

worked and directed. Sir William, her husband, smiles approval, and both expect with eagerness the coming of the hero, who has a lodging near by, in St. James's Street.

It is not polite altogether to ignore this lady's husband. He is a little in the background, to be sure, sitting there rather pathetically, planning how to get himself rewarded for his services to his country, interested in art, enthusiastically admiring his beautiful wife and her heroic lover. They in turn respected and liked him. I do not think there is any obligation upon us to go about to inquire precisely how much Sir William Hamilton knew. I confess that to me it seems a thing almost incredible, in all the circumstances, that he did not know everything—a thing quite incredible that he did not know much. He acquiesced in much, and for this acquiescence you are at liberty, if you choose, to find many hard words. But, unless you take your knowledge or ignorance of life from novels and plays, you cannot think it monstrous or unique. He was an old man with a fatherly love for the beautiful woman he had so generously—perhaps so foolishly—married,

with an affectionate admiration for her lover; I am not seeking to excuse, but merely to suggest to you how he may be explained without any positive necessity for execrating him. Poor Sir William Hamilton! He is a figure of immemorial comedy, of course, a pathetic figure, not altogether unlovable.

Only for a short time was Nelson able to frequent 23 Piccadilly. Soon he had hoisted his flag for the expedition which was to end at Copenhagen. But there was no lack of visitors there. Queen Charlotte naturally refused to receive Lady Hamilton, and she was not 'in society' as the respectably exclusive understood it, but there were many distinguished people who did not consider her interesting career a bar to acquaintance. Old Q., for example, did not mind it in the least. She was a great favourite with that ancient voluptuary, and was not omitted from his famous will. Those accomplished cousins, Lady Diana Beauclerck and Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, had for her that admiration which women (so often maligned in this regard) are wont to have for the beautiful of their sex, when they

themselves have wit as well as looks. Various other fashionable but less important ladies came to her. Walter Savage Landor came and wrote verses about her. Mrs. Billington came—a pretty creature whose society unhappily could not increase Emma's respectability. Crowds of refugee Italians, crowds of humble relations, were delighted to come. George, Prince of Wales, wished to come, but there was a terrible fuss about that, which we will attend to in a minute, and he came not. Greville, Sir William's nephew and her old 'protector,' came, with cynical thoughts, it may be, but (I am convinced) quite good-naturedly. It is the custom of Lady Hamilton's champions to say harsh things of Greville, but I think their zeal outruns their judgment. Even the professed morality of his day would hardly have condemned his relation with Emma Hart, or Lyon, when the friendless girl, cast out by another man, threw herself at his head with her 'What shall I dow? Good God, what shall I dow?' He treated her kindly and educated her attentively, if with incomplete success. It is really absurd to suppose that by any standard of conduct

known to him—we have much better standards now—he ought to have married her, or that he ought to have welcomed her as an aunt with reverent joy. They remained friends, and that should be enough for the champions.

All these people Emma Hamilton entertained with her impulsive kindness and her great powers of amusement. She struck her famous 'attitudes' for them, and she danced the tarantella. Wraxall gives us a vivid account of this treat. It happened on the evening of the day that the news of Copenhagen came, the 15th of April 1801. He looked in at 23 Piccadilly about ten o'clock, and found Old Q. there, and the Duke of Gordon, Calonne, the Duke de Noia from Naples, John Kemble and his wife, Greville, and Nelson's brother the parson—an interesting company. Emma, radiant with victory, sang to the harpsichord and danced the tarantella, and it is pleasant to note that what apparently impressed Wraxall, even more than the lady's grace, was the agility of her veteran husband.

'Sir William began it with her, and maintained the conflict, for such it might well be

esteemed, for some minutes. When, unable longer to continue it, the Duke de Noia succeeded to his place; but he too, though near forty years younger than Sir William, soon gave in. Lady Hamilton then sent for her own maidservant; who, being likewise exhausted, after a short time, another female attendant, a Copt, perfectly black, whom Lord Nelson had presented her, on his return from Egypt, relieved her companion. It would be difficult to convey any idea of this dance; but the *Fandango* and *Seguedilla* of the Spaniards present an image of it. We must recollect that the two performers are supposed to be a Satyr and a Nymph; or, rather, a Fawn and a Bacchant. It was certainly not of a nature to be performed, except before a select company; as the screams, attitudes, starts, and embraces, with which it was intermingled, gave it a peculiar character. I only mentioned it'—I forgive him freely—'in order to show Sir William Hamilton's activity and gaiety at that advanced period of life.'

Such doings at the little house in Piccadilly! But life then was not all singing and dancing for Emma Hamilton. On Janu-

ary 29 she had given birth to Horatia, and a fortnight later she was playing hostess, as though nothing had happened; not three months later, as we have seen, she was wearing down four successive partners in the tarantella. Wonderful pluck, and a wonderful constitution truly; and if they alone made character one would join with the most fervid of her eulogists. Nelson's correspondence with her about this event is surely as curious as any letters ever hero penned. They arranged an elaborate system of deceit—could it really have deceived?—according to which Nelson had an anxious officer called Thomson, whose wife, befriended by Emma, was expecting her confinement. Letters come addressed to 'Mrs. Thomson,' and the expedient is further used in his avowed letters to her by frequent mention of the Thomsons. 'I believe dear Mrs. Thomson's friend'—when Horatia had been born—'will go mad with joy. He cries, prays, and performs all tricks, yet dares not show all or any of his feelings, but he has only me to consult with. He swears he will drink your health in a bumper . . . he does nothing but rave about you and her.' So

he wrote to her whom he thought, as a later letter has it, his 'wife in the eye of God.' The dried bones of a passion are always sad to see, but a dead passion which was debased by deceit and subterfuge is pitiable.

And this passion was debased by something worse than deceit. It is worth while, since we are on the subject, that our idea of Nelson and Lady Hamilton should correspond to the truth; and the truth was not, as one would suppose from sentimental reflections, that their passion—apart from its unhappy conflict with convention and customary standards—was an ennobling and ideal one. Take the most tolerant view, which is the wisest as a rule, and suppose that what is finest in the relation between a man and a woman may co-exist with that which in the eye of the world is wrong. Those of us who will admit this probably know of cases where they are certain of it. Yes; but the least this assumes is that the man and the woman are sure of one another. Can it possibly be an ideal and ennobling passion when the man is racked with fear of the woman's unfaithfulness?

The Prince of Wales intimated his wish

to dine with Sir William and Lady Hamilton. It was obviously difficult to refuse, and Sir William, moreover, wanted the Prince's aid in getting a pension. When Nelson heard of the project he was beside himself with rage and anxiety, and wrote letter after letter of hysterical protest. He assumes that the Prince's intention was to make Lady Hamilton his mistress, and for that assumption there was unfortunately only too much reason. But his letters, further, mean nothing if he was not afraid that she would consent. 'Do not sit long at table. Good God! He will be next you and telling you soft things. . . . His words are so charming that, I am told, no person can resist them. . . . Hush, hush, my poor heart! keep in my breast, be calm, Emma is true. . . . But no one, not even Emma, could resist the serpent's tongue. . . . Did you sit alone with the villain? No! I will not believe it. Do not let the rascal in.' And so forth: a medley of entreaty and fear, and protestations of faith, which truly protest too much. One hardly knows whether to laugh or cry. Here was a great hero, writing to the woman who was the love of

his life, and he fears lest the attractions of a licensed debauchee, 'a star-coated rapscallion,' as Squire Beltham has it, should be too much for her; that it was not safe for her to sit next him at dinner. Alas! One can only suppose that there was little heroic in the woman to whom he wrote. His fear may have been baseless—she had to appease it by giving up the dinner—but that he had it tells us too much for any but a confirmed sentimentalist to go on rhapsodising about their passion. I like the woman, but there is an old tag about liking and truth.

Yet Nelson's love for Emma Hamilton, ennobling or otherwise, was the thing nearest his heart, and no view of her character can acquit the English Government—or the nation, in so far as it knew and made no protest—of the blackest ingratitude and treachery to Nelson in leaving her to starve. I trust if I have seemed cold about her my sincere warmth in this regard may partly excuse me to the sentimentalists. The stupid, ghastly irony of it! 'Remember that I leave Lady Hamilton and my daughter to my country'; those were almost his last

words. He had lived for his country, and he had died for it. His country loudly acclaimed that he had saved it. And his country made his brother, who had saved no one unless in his calling as a clergyman, an earl, and gave him £120,000. And his country entirely ignored the necessities of the woman and child he had left to its care. By the time they were actually in want it was thinking of other matters, to be sure. Yet with all her faults Emma Hamilton had not done the country ill-service. She might have hindered Nelson from his devotion to it, but she ever added fuel to that fire. The country might have remembered her, but it was content with that magnificent piece of irrelevance in regard to Nelson's brother. Besides, when a strict regard for morality positively pays . . . I suppose it is ingenuous to be surprised.

The black days were yet distant when Merton Place was bought, and Piccadilly ceased to be Lady Hamilton's constant abode. Sir William kept on the house, it is true, and she was there sometimes. She lived just out of Piccadilly, in Clarges Street, for some years later on. Keeping

strictly to my theme and its limitations, however, I confine her association with Piccadilly to that eventful year of 1801, when Copenhagen was fought, and Horatia was born, and she danced the tarantella to Old Q. and the Kembles. We take leave of her at the end of it—the gay, generous, clever, coarse, beautiful creature.

CHAPTER XI

SIR WALTER IN LONDON

We who are tired Londoners, tired with too much work or too much play or too much sauntering, know the effect upon us of a hearty visitor from the country. It is not always exhilarating, to be sure. If our tired feeling has gone too far, or if the visitor is unsympathetic and intent only on enjoying himself—if he takes up our time unreasonably, himself holiday-making, and insists on taking us whither we would not—then no doubt he is a nuisance. But if we like him, and he duly remembers that the life he rushes into has for us the limitations of normality, then how refreshing is his heartiness! How jolly are his ruddy face and strong voice and firm grip and zest in our common experiences—nay, how pleasant it is merely to watch his remarkable meals!

Walter Scott must have been the prince

of such visitors from the country. (Dear Scottish reader, I know he lived partly in Edinburgh, and that it was and is a great city: still, for Londoners he came from the country, and though Abbotsford was not his at the time of his first few visits, Lasswade and Ashestiel were.) Pleasant indeed to his London friends must have been the sight of his friendly face and the sound of his friendly voice, with the northern accent which can be so charming when the northern lips obey a rich mind and a kind heart. His gaiety and *bonhomie* and humour must have been infectious. His interest in all that was going on, and his simple, modest pleasure in the lionising of himself, must have done one good to behold. Had I happily been a Londoner of his acquaintance, I can imagine hardly any news it would have been more grateful to hear than that Walter Scott was in town and I was to meet him at dinner. As it is, I welcome his incursion into these pages, where the atmosphere is perforce at times a little close, as a wholesome breeze. I rejoice that in most of his visits—and the best and longest—he was housed in Piccadilly.

Walter Scott came first to London at the age of four, on his way to Bath, where it was hoped—alas! in vain—that the waters might cure his lameness. It was twenty-five years before he came again, and then, he tells us, he had kept an accurate recollection of Westminster Abbey and the Tower. (No doubt he tells us truly, but we whose memories begin later are apt enviously to suppose that people deceive themselves over this gift.) Mat Lewis introduced him 'to some literary and fashionable society,' says Lockhart, but gives us no names, adding only that Scott was 'much amused' with it —not patronisingly, from a superior Edinburgh standpoint, I am sure. Nor are we told where he stayed on this occasion, and so have no right to linger over it. The death of his father sadly cut it short.

Four years later, in April 1803, he was established at 'No. 15, Piccadilly West.' This was a bay-fronted house at the corner of Whitehorse Street, where now stands the Junior Naval and Military Club, numbered 96 Piccadilly. It was the residence of Monsieur Charles Dumergue, an old and intimate friend of Scott's wife and her

family. Scott married, if you will forgive my reminding you, Miss Charlotte Carpenter, whose mother, the widow of Jean Charpentier of Lyons, fled to England with her children at the beginning of the Revolution. M. Dumergue was a great friend of his exiled fellow-countrymen, and befriended Madame Charpentier on this occasion with especial warmth, for he had known her and her husband well in his early days in France. I wish there were more to be said of M. Charles Dumergue, who deserves record as a Piccadilly worthy, as does his sister, Miss Sophia, whom I find living at No. 96, in Boyle's *Court Guide*, as late as 1825. But beyond the facts of his kindness and hospitality, and his being surgeon-dentist to the royal family, I fear I have nothing to say about him. But Scott made this house in Piccadilly his London home until a child of his own was established there, and seeing that he was the last man in the world to accept favours from one he did not like, we know much to the credit of M. Charles Dumergue. It must have given a cosmopolitan touch to Scott's London visits that in this house he found an interesting French society.

The time of his lionising in London dates from 1809, when he came in February and stayed two months. *Marmion* was out, and he was seated firmly on that poetical throne he was to occupy until Byron, with perfect good humour on both sides, displaced him. London society threw itself at him, of course. Then, as now, notoriety was the chief thing it cared for. I think, however, that its homage then was rather more of a compliment than it is now, and that Walter Scott was quite right to value it, as undoubtedly he did. It was a proof, at any rate, that his fame had reached the herd, and as a practical man who had an ardent wish, neither unnatural nor discreditable for one of his tastes and opinions, to live as a country gentleman of means, of course he valued the proof. Social success, for its own sake, he was far too shrewd to overvalue: 'It may be a pleasant gale to sail with,' he said, 'but it never yet led to a port that I should like to anchor in.' But no doubt, too, he liked the ornamental side of it. He liked titles and ancient names, which were found together a little more commonly then. Why not? It is really

absurd to suppose that a man of his genius could have had a mean admiration for them, or a mean pleasure in association with them. He had a passion for historical memories and a keen eye for the picturesque: that was all, unless we may say that his mind (like Dr. Johnson's, who was of opinion that 'the Duchess of Newcastle may do what she pleases'), leant to fixed positions and privileges, as on the whole the happiest condition for humanity. If Scott was happy in London society, London society was doubly happy in him. Its lions are so often dull dogs, who repay civility with growls or awkward pretences of intimacy, that it must have been genuinely charmed to happen on a lion who roared when required and as it expected. He used the familiar metaphor himself. 'Well,' he would say to his friend, Mr. Morritt, who lived in Portland Place, 'do you want me to play lion to-day? I will roar, if you like it, to your heart's content.' And he roared with gusto. 'If people are amused,' said he, 'with hearing me tell a parcel of old stories, or recite a pack of ballads to lovely young girls and gaping matrons, they are easily pleased, and

a man would be very ill-natured who would not give pleasure so cheaply conferred.' What a gay, benevolent, unaffected attitude it was! To watch a great man go through his hoops is not an ideal theory of social intercourse; but since one side had it, how sweet and how rare it was in the other to adopt it with such simple urbanity. 'Then, as the party dwindled,' Mr. Morritt says, 'and we were left alone, he laughed at himself, quoted—"Yet know that I one Smug the joiner am—no lion fierce," etc., and was at once himself again.' What a lesson for lions was there!

Now go forward to the spring of 1815 and watch M. Dumergue's house in Piccadilly, one fine morning in April—the 7th, if you will be exact. Comes out a tall, big man with a broad, intellectual, humane face. He turns up Piccadilly, leaning heavily on a stick and limping, a dog at his heels. I am sure there was a dog, though Camp, the bull-terrier, who was with him when he first stayed in Piccadilly, was dead. He hobbles up Piccadilly to Albemarle Street, turns up it and goes in at No. 50, where he has an important engagement. Mr. Murray,

the publisher, is to make him known to Byron.

Every one, I suppose, has read about that meeting, and knows how quickly the poets took to one another; how John Murray the second, then a boy, remembered them stumping downstairs side by side; how they met almost daily in Albemarle Street and talked for hours at a time, and how when they had parted for the last time they exchanged gifts, 'like the old heroes in Homer,' as Scott himself says. He gave Byron a Turkish dagger, and Byron gave him a silver vase full of dead men's bones, with a kind letter which Scott cherished in the vase until some accursed guest or unbidden tourist stole it. A meeting of heroes, to be sure, and I think we may easily mistake its nature for that reason, fancying a solemn sort of occasion. Really, I suspect these meetings at John Murray's were hilarious: neither man, in my opinion, would have sought them so often for intellectual or literary entertainment. Scott was only forty-three, after all, and Byron only twenty-seven; both had humour and a love of fun, and both knew much of the world;

I am sure they laughed heartily. They laughed, Scott tells us, over those gloomy and ominous gifts, and what the public might think of them; indeed, it would be very like the public not to know that only gaiety could prompt that vase of dead men's bones even at twenty-seven. It is certain that they had merrymakings in general society. Our friend Captain Gronow tells us how he met them together at dinner at Sir James Bland Burgess's, in Lower Brook Street, in the autumn of this year. Scott was 'quite delightful, full of fire and animation'; Byron was 'in great good humour, and full of boyish and even boisterous mirth'; even John Wilson Croker was agreeable on this occasion. They sat late, and drank a great deal of wine, and Walter Scott recited some of his old ballads. It was Byron's gaiety, too, which most impressed Scott when he saw him for what proved to be the last time at Long's, in Bond Street, lunching or dining, with Charles Mathews the comedian to help the fun, and we may be sure that Scott responded. If they never stumped down Piccadilly homewards together, assuredly

Byron must sometimes have given Scott a lift in his 'vis'; they were such near neighbours. Picture it stopping at 96, and Scott turning round on the pavement with a parting joke.

It was during this visit to London that he made an acquaintance which with all his loyalty I hope he valued less. He was presented to the Regent, and asked immediately afterwards to dinner at Carlton House. There is no doubt that George could do this sort of courtesy with a winning grace when he chose, and we know that he captivated Scott. He called him 'Walter' before the evening was over; drank to the 'Author of *Waverley*'; and when Scott disclaimed the honour, to the 'Author of *Marmion*.' 'Now, Walter, my man, I have checkmated you for ance'—alluding to the brutally humorous Scotch story of the judge and his old chess-playing friend in the dock, which Scott had just told him. A delightful evening, certainly, though I would rather have been at Sir James Bland Burgess's. And altogether an interesting stay in Piccadilly for Walter Scott, this of 1815.

He was there in 1820 when an uproar

about Sir Francis Burdett, who lived at No. 80, was going forward, and he writes to his wife of the 'hellish,—yes, literally hellish, bustle. My head turns round with it. The whole mob of the Middlesex blackguards pass through Piccadilly twice a day, and almost drive me mad with their noise and violence.' He writes to James Ballantyne, also—dating, by the way, from '96 Piccadilly,' no longer '15 Piccadilly West': 'I cannot write much in this bustle of engagements, with Sir Francis's mob hollowing under the windows. I find that even this light composition demands a certain degree of silence, and I might as well live in a cotton mill.' Possibly this note about the noise shows that his nerves and spirit were not quite so wonderful as they had been. That is more clearly suggested by a waning fascination of the London world and its habits. 'I find,' he writes, 'I cannot bear late hours and great society as well as formerly; and yet it is a fine thing to hear politics talked of by Ministers of State, and war discussed by the Duke of Wellington.' He had been dining at Arbuthnot's to meet the Duke, and took his son Walter, the Cornet, with

him, to hear 'the great Lord in all his glory talk of war and Waterloo.'

Three notable things happened to him during this visit: he was made a baronet, and had his portrait done by Lawrence, and his bust by Chantrey. Lawrence relates that Scott—like the Duke—chose seven in the morning for his sittings, and would talk about all sorts of subjects—at that hour! What a man!—and the painter found it difficult to make him look solemn, though he used to lure him by quoting poetry at him. The Chantrey business was prefaced by a characteristic incident. Chantrey sent Allan Cunningham—his clerk of the works and a poet, who had started life as a stonemason, and had walked from Nithsdale to Edinburgh for the sole purpose of seeing Scott—to ask him for a sitting, and Cunningham has left a fine impression of his hearty, genial way. 'It was about nine in the morning that I sent in my card to him at Miss Dumergue's, in Piccadilly. It had not been gone a minute, when I heard a quick, heavy step coming, and in he came, holding out both hands, as was his custom, and saying as he pressed mine—" Allan Cunningham,

I am glad to see you." I said something about the pleasure I felt in touching the hand that had charmed me so much. He moved his hand and, with one of his comic smiles, said: "Ay—and a big brown hand it is."' And then he put Allan at his ease and praised his ballads and won his heart.

I think I will leave Walter Scott at this moment, at the height of his fame and happiness, talking with his devoted countryman at 96 Piccadilly. Great troubles were in store for that kind heart, as we know: the loss of his wife, and the crash of his material fortunes. We need not distress ourselves by thinking of them. They were some years off, and it happened that this visit to London in 1820 was the last he spent in Piccadilly. Only memories of kindness and joy, and zest in life, and a multitude of honours and interests, had the bay-fronted house at the corner of Whitehorse Street for him, and only on these need we muse as we think of him in Piccadilly.



Harriot Mellon Duchess of St. Albans

CHAPTER XIII

HARRIOT MELLON

HEADS I may, tails I mayn't. Heads it is. When you have to settle a point in casuistry for practical purposes, and really cannot make up your mind, the spin of a coin is as good a method as another. Deliberately to break my rule against turning up side-streets would make the whole affair chaotic and amorphous. If in this case, why not in others? But then there had been material for a book five times as long, which it was not convenient for me to write. In the case of the Coutts house, however, it was doubtful if the rule applied. It is numbered No. 1 Stratton Street, but it might just as well have had a number in Piccadilly, even as Bath House, which has its entrance in Bolton Street. Its portly side bulges along the Piccadilly pavement. I think any doubt

of its proper inclusion was one fairly to be submitted to a coin; but perhaps if we have occasion to look inside, we ought to clamber up the railings in Piccadilly and not go in by the Stratton Street door.

It would have been hard to forego such a glorious, gorgeous creature as Harriot Mellon, who became Mrs. Coutts, and afterwards Duchess of St. Albans. Her bright, comely face and jolly presence are, in their way, as joyful a memory of Piccadilly as Walter Scott's wiser geniality, whom it is meet that she should follow in my pages, since they were great friends in their lives.

To write much of her earlier history is beyond my province, but something of it you must know if you are rightly to appreciate her. If you would know more, I commend to you the two volumes about her published in 1839, soon after her death, by Mrs. Cornwall Barron-Wilson, reasonably well written, and full of curious glimpses of the life led by poor strolling players and successful London players of those days, with their patrons and parasites. There 's her mother, for example, a character I wonder Thackeray never made his own—

an Irish peasant turned hanger-on of the boards, enormously vain, violent, greedy, exceeding beautiful, not without a sense of duty towards her daughter, and full of great ambitions for her. She was the more beautiful of the two, as Harriot always maintained, a brunette like her daughter, but with a fine oval face, whereas Harriot's was of a merry Irish roundness; like her daughter she had beautiful teeth, and black hair, and a sweet voice. As for Mellon *père*, he was an agreeable mystery. The known fact was that a handsome young man, calling himself Lieutenant Mathew Mellon, came to Cork, where Harriot's mother was a girl in a mantua shop, and became the father of Harriot. The mother said, firstly, that he made her an honest woman, and secondly, that his name was not really Mellon at all, but that he was a great young man incognito. Harriot, a person of sense, liked to believe the former statement, and laughed at the latter. But her mother, though she never saw Mr. Mellon again, insisted always on his noble birth—why did not Thackeray draw her?—and would end her scoldings of Harriot with '*You* to do so, Harriot, with

such high blood in your veins!' Like many other excellent comedians in private life, she was no use on the boards, never in fact got beyond being dresser and money-taker. Whether she married Mr. Mellon or not, it is certain that she married, a few years later, one Mr. Entwistle, who is pleasantly described by Mrs. Barron-Wilson as 'the son of a very respectable person, who occasionally played the organ at Wigan.' Music ran in the family, more or less, for our Mr. Entwistle performed in the orchestra at the theatre. Otherwise, he was not of much account. When Harriot became prosperous she got him the position of postmaster at Cheltenham, where he passed his declining years in the neglect of his duties and the consumption of beer. I must not linger over these good people, but it is to be said for them that though they were not always kind to poor Harriot—the mother was often brutal—and were always eager to sponge on rich Harriot, they educated her as well as they could, and were efficient guardians of her respectability.

Few young women have been better fitted than Harriot Mellon was to make the best

of the rough and tumble in a strolling player's life. She had health and high spirits. Like her mother, she was hot-tempered, but, at this period at least, she was placable and, then and always, the soul of good-nature. She was popular with her comrades, and made good friends with 'respectable' people, whom her playing first attracted, and her merry, kindly nature confirmed, in affection. She was bred to live hardly when it was needful, and born to live heartily when it was possible. Yes, beyond question, Harriot enjoyed herself very well as a strolling player. Also, she was a good girl.

It was at Stafford that the great Mr. Sheridan saw her, and promised her an engagement at Drury Lane. He was member for Stafford then, in 1794, and had come down to act as steward for the races. But Sheridan's promises were frail things, and it took much reminding from constituents who loved Harriot before he kept this one. Eventually, however, he kept it; and three years later she was installed in Drury Lane. And there she stayed for twenty years. It is improbable that she

was anything like a great actress. She was fortunate in having been brought up to read for herself, and to admire, and in having a quick and retentive memory. A 'quick study' was, in those days, when plays changed so often, more valuable than now, and Miss Mellon profited much by the accidental or unforeseen abstention of others. Then she was clever, and had constitution and good looks. Not that she was a great beauty: she was, a contemporary player records, 'merely a countrified girl, blooming in complexion, with a very tall, fine figure, raven locks, ivory teeth, a cheek like a peach, and coral lips.' Ah well, these be good things truly, even though, as he says, all they put you in mind of was 'a country road and a pillion.' Naturally, though she played a multitude of parts, she was best in country, bouncing ones—was a famous Audrey, and a splendid Peggy in *The Country Girl.*

I cannot keep my hands off one behind-the-scenes story, because it gives one the air and atmosphere of the life, and brings in Dicky Suett, a comedian whom Charles Lamb has made a lovable memory. She

was playing Lydia Languish, and determined to make up fair, for like other brunettes, as Mrs. Barron-Wilson says, Harriot, of all things, admired a transparent complexion. So she covered her face with powder, and covered the powder with rouge, and made herself a perfect fright, and so played a couple of acts. Dicky, who was to act later in the evening, watched her from the front, and came round to remonstrate. 'Why, Peggy child,'—I suppose he called her Peggy from her famous part—'what a fright you have made yourself! Your little nose, glaring with white, looks broader than it is long, and as for your fat cheeks, they look like two of your landlady's muffins. How dare you put on so much white paint?' Harriot said indignantly that it was only a little powder, but Dicky persisted. 'Just let me lengthen the corners of your mouth upwards, and then you will be ready to act as clown in the pantomime. Go and wash your pretty face, Peggy; go and wash your nice, brown, merry face!' And Harriot, furious, but knowing that Dicky knew, went to do as she was told. Alas! washing only made the matter worse, for the powder

turned into little rolls all over her face. She was barely made presentable in time, but Dicky Suett applauded. 'You bear a scolding very well, Peggy, and you 've played your character very well also. Now go home and eat some muffins.' One has the idea of a cheerful, homely little society behind the scenes of the great theatre, and that leading ladies of those days did not adopt what they believed to be the airs of great ladies.

Yet a great lady 'Peggy child' was to be; for towards the end of her time at the Lane there entered the figure of Mr. Coutts, the great banker. Of himself I have not very much to say. His record is one for Mr. Samuel Smiles's pages rather than for mine. Men who come from Scotland young and poor, and die enormously rich in London, command my respect, but not necessarily my affection. It is to be said in Thomas Coutts's favour that since his first wife was a housemaid, and his second an actress, he seems to have had the courage to 'live his own life,' which should be possessed by those who live in Piccadilly. He was not a vulgarian either. Rich and self-made men of his generation were frankly proud of

their riches (and, on the whole, I prefer that to the bland irony about money practised by their successors); but if Thomas Coutts made no secret of his wealth when he entertained his friends—and I think the joyous Harriot helped to reveal it—he was a man of taste and dignity. He loved to be taken for a poor man. In those happy days for millionaires, charity might be promiscuous and casual, and unscientific; you could go out in poor array, and some charitable and really poor man would press a guinea on you, and you, slyly chuckling, would go home and drop him a handsome cheque. Such things are recorded of Thomas Coutts. A lean, ailing, shabbily-dressed figure with a kind face—that is Thomas Coutts if you meet his ghost at the corner of Stratton Street.

He was a very old man when he encountered Harriot Mellon. It might not be unfair to speak of senile passion, but I think his love was mainly a strong fatherly affection. And if it is not uncharitable, either, to suppose that she looked with joy to marrying this wealthy old man when his wife, who was a lunatic, should die, she

certainly had for him a true affection. Her manner towards him and her tone in speaking of him were always perfect, always dutiful and grateful. When at last his wife died, he was for marriage at once, but she would not. She consented at length to a private marriage in order to nurse him through a serious illness, and the marriage was publicly announced and celebrated on March 2, 1815. She had taken leave of Drury Lane for ever, where one of her last actions was secretly to relieve the necessities of Edmund Kean at the beginning of his career.

So behold Harriot installed at No. 1 Stratton Street, Piccadilly. It is pleasant to think of her there, frankly enjoying her wealth and splendour and the good things of life, generously sharing them with her friends. She was nearing forty now, and the fine figure was something filled out, but she was handsome and lively and hearty. Great was the hospitality in Piccadilly, and at Holly Lodge, Highgate, and at Brighton: hospitality sometimes abused, but taken very kindly by the great world. Royal Dukes came, but old friends were not sent

away. There are various stories of the Coutts's ménage. Gronow has one of the eminent jeweller, Hamlet, being brought into the dining-room while they were at dinner, and showing a magnificent diamond cross, which had been worn the day before at the coronation of George IV. by the Duke of York. Harriot admired it, and Hamlet wanted for it £15,000. 'Bring me a pen and ink,' cried Thomas Coutts. Well, we should call it vulgar now; but it is pleasant (as we stand on the railings in Piccadilly and look in at the window) to observe the smiling old gentleman, the grateful Harriot, the admiring guests. Very likely, though, there is a touch of malice in Gronow here. There 's another story of Harriot's dressing up as Morgiana and prancing about with a dagger. All very jolly and gay.

Mr. Coutts was eighty when he married, but he enjoyed Harriot's society till 1822, when he left her his fortune. She continued her generous, expansive, somewhat flamboyant life. It was not all untroubled: the lives of those who have shot up like rockets are seldom untroubled. Blackmailers marked her for their prey, especially blackmailing

'literary' blackguards. One of them wrote *The Secret Memoirs of Harriot Pumpkin*, which was bought up. As a rule she resisted these gentry with a stout front, and affected a brave indifference, keeping on her table the rags which printed paragraphs about her. Another trouble was that her health was no longer so splendid as it had been, and she lamented that she might no more drink a glass of bitter beer—even as Byron, much about the same time, was lamenting the absence of beer in Italy. But I think we can be sure that she enjoyed herself pretty thoroughly. She gave much—much openly, and more in private—as kind in her way, though far less wisely, as the beneficent lady, her husband's granddaughter, who died in Stratton Street so lately. But it is idle to pretend that the good Mrs. Coutts was not ostentatious, and indeed I think it more fitting to the jolly, radiant picture of her that she should have been. Walter Scott, her friend, said she was 'without either affectation or insolence in the display of her wealth,' and no doubt he spoke truly. There was no insolence in the display: she just enjoyed her wealth frankly

and openly, but display there was. Lockhart describes her arrival at Abbotsford. 'Although she was considerate enough not to come on him with all her retinue (leaving four of the seven carriages with which she travelled to Edinburgh), the appearance of only three coaches, each drawn by four horses, was rather trying to poor Lady Scott. They contained Mrs. Coutts, her future lord, the Duke of St. Albans, one of his Grace's sisters, a *dame de compagnie*, vulgarly called a "toady," a brace of physicians, for it had been considered that one doctor might himself be disabled in the course of an expedition so adventurous; and besides other menials of every grade, two bedchamber women for Mrs. Coutts's own person, she requiring to have this article also in duplicate, because in her widowed condition she was fearful of ghosts, and there must be one Abigail for the service of the toilette, a second to keep watch by night.' If Dicky Suett could have foreseen all this when he told 'Peggy child' to go and wash her pretty face! The superstition, by the way,—if in these obscurantist days one is allowed to call anything superstition—is truly alleged:

she had many superstitions, not being born of an Irish peasant and bred on the stage for nothing. I like the story of this Abbotsford visit. There were several ladies 'of high birth and rank' in the house, and these were sniffy and stuffy, as we say, with poor Mrs. Coutts. Happily for her, Walter Scott was a gentleman: he took a marchioness aside after dinner and told her plainly that if she and the others were not disposed to be agreeable to his guest they ought to have left before she came. She told the others and they came to heel, and presently Mrs. Coutts, her sensitiveness appeased, was telling stories of the stage, and joining in the 'Laird of Cockpen.'

But we must get back to the corner of Stratton Street, which was soon to have a new inmate in the Duke of St. Albans. Mrs. Barron-Wilson gratifies sentiment in saying that he fell in love with Mrs. Coutts And why not? I, too, might have fallen in love with her—at his age, for he was much younger than she: at mine, if the dogmatists about these things say true, one would have loved her better when she was 'Peggy child.' And if the sentimentalists demand it, there

is no reason why she should not have loved the duke. Let us suppose that the fair exchange of rank and money was merely a convenient addition to a union of hearts. In our days, when rank means so much less, a renowned mistress of millions would not be thought to have made a tremendous advance in becoming a duchess. Then, of course, it was a nine days' marvel, and even now it seems a pretty, picturesque end to an old tale—the old tale, eternally new, of the humble being exalted.

However much she may have loved her duke, Harriet cared little for his *milieu*. She contrasted it with the atmosphere of the boards, where it was 'all cheerfulness, all high spirits, all fun, frolic, and vivacity,' whereas here, everything was 'weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable.' The friend she was speaking to made the tactless suggestion that the difference was only that she was older, but Harriot would not have it: 'In high life,' said she, 'there is no such thing as youth; people are old when they first come out; they are too fine and fastidious to enjoy anything.' Since youth is always youth, it would seem that the youth of her

new circle was not frank and familiar with Harriot, which was stupid on its part and a great pity.

Ten years of her duke and his *milieu* she had, and then she died, in 1837, at the age of sixty. She fell ill at Holly Lodge, but insisted on being taken to Stratton Street. They made her bed in the drawing-room, for the advantage of the air, but she bade them take her to Mr. Coutts's room, to die on his bed. When Lady Guilford, one of Mr. Coutts's daughters, came to her, she said that he had taken the shape of a little bird, singing at her window, just as he said he would if he could, and it is related that the old man had really made her this strange promise on his death-bed, and that even when well and strong she had believed in it, and would be happy when a bird had fluttered near her window. The vulgar cynics had laughed, but here at least we are, I think, at one with the biographer in seeing true love and kindness. Yes, it is a strange and true romance, that of old Tom Coutts and his Harriot, a strange and gracious memory for Piccadilly.

CHAPTER XIV

SOME OTHER PEOPLE

HAD I been willing to pad my book, this chapter, with a tolerably plausible demand on the reader's patience, might have served me for three or four. A long chapter, assuredly, might have been written on Charles Fox, who had a Piccadilly lodging with his friend, Richard FitzPatrick, for a while in his youth. But it would not really have been fair. It is only for that while in his youth that Charles belongs by right of domicile to Piccadilly, and I really must not take you through his career and discourse on his matured character. Then there is George Selwyn in exactly the same case. And Beckford, that weird, wonderful, morbid creature—he, too, is said to have lived here for a time, but he does not truly belong to our theme. Yet I hope you will not grudge me a short chapter between them.

I permit myself, then, a rough sketch of Charles Fox as he was when he and Fitz-Patrick took lodgings at one Mackie's, an oilman. Precisely where Mackie's was, I have not been able to discover, but we may take it to have been east of St. James's Street, and handy for Brooks's. It was prophesied that Charles and his friend would ruin the unfortunate oilman, but George Selwyn said no, they would make his fortune, 'for he will have the credit of having the finest pickles in his house of any man in London.' So he had—no doubt whatever. Never lived a finer pickle than Charles Fox in his youth since Mark Antony in his; but Antony was a less agreeable mixture. Never was there such a gay and sanguine and splendid plunge into all the pleasures of life, as when Charles Fox came upon the town in 1767 or so. It makes one almost young and ardent to think on it. He had inextinguishable spirits, a beautiful temperament, an iron constitution; he was indulged and adored by his friends, men and women alike; he had ambition and a certainty of achieving it; he had a zeal for pleasure both hot and catholic, learning and taste

withal, judgment and humour; life opened before him many-coloured and dazzling, and he was not yet twenty. Picture him coming out of Mackie's of an afternoon, only just up, belike, having gone to bed at a dreadful hour, but fresh and happy; his black eyes twinkling and bright with the thought of the speech he is to make in the House, or the money he is sure—alas, poor Charles!—he will win at Brooks's, or the woman who will never resist him; with the swarthy face and the heavy, harsh features that so belied his nature; with a smile on his lips and his whole aspect radiating health and good temper. He, who was to be known for his slovenly dress, is still in his Macaroni period, and is wonderfully and laboriously attired, wearing, very probably, the pattern of embroidered waistcoat he had driven all the way from Paris to Lyons to acquire. A gay figure altogether. Oh yes, trouble is to come upon him, long years of disappointment, many waves of debt sweeping over him. But the swarthy face will ever come up smiling, and with him, truly, a cheerful heart goes all the way. Like his contem-

poraries, we will repress our insurgent morality, realising that Charles is unique, and being thankful so rich and genial a nature should be.

It is interesting to note the influences which had gone to fashion this prodigy of genius and kindness and recklessness, who was now freely to try his powers on so great a stage at a time of life at which, nowadays, he would be called a boy for the next ten years or so. He was the son of a capable, unscrupulous, kindly man and a high-spirited woman. His mother (Lady Caroline Lennox) was a great-granddaughter of Charles the Second, and a fanciful writer has indulged in a parallel between the King and the later prodigal, remarking traits common to both, such as a love of walking and a power of ready sleep, and hard features contradicting a soft nature. There may not be much in the speculation, but these alleged 'throw-backs' are a rather attractive study. Another point in Charles's parentage is that his grandfather, old Stephen Fox, who started life as a choir-boy, saw the execution of Charles the First, and begot Henry, Charles's father, when he was seventy-six. He had married

his first wife when young, and a daughter of that marriage died a baby. Lady Sarah Lennox, Lady Caroline's sister, whom George the Third wished to marry, and who was the mother of the Napiers, did not die till 1826; consequently, as Sir George Trevelyan says, the tradition may well be true that Charles Fox had two aunts who died a hundred and seventy years from each other. (My apologies: I know it is irrelevant, but I cannot resist that sort of anecdote.) Henry Fox and Lady Caroline made a runaway match of it, and the affair was a great scandal. They did not repent at leisure, but lived in unbroken happiness for more than thirty years, so that Charles had the unspeakable advantage of living his babyhood and boyhood in a peaceful and affectionate home.

And then we come to the strange and almost unique facts of his upbringing. There have been other indulgent fathers besides Henry Fox, afterwards Lord Holland, but none, so far as records go, who carried indulgence so far as he. His theory of the proper management of children was, that they should have everything they wanted, and do whatever they chose. An old story,

true or false, really epitomises his treatment: Charles said he was going to destroy a watch; and 'well, if you must, I suppose you must,' said his judicious father. Charles decided for himself that he would go to school at Wandsworth and later to Eton, and so forth. For my part, I think all this a fault on the right side, given a sensible and affectionate child, as Charles was; another might have grown into a monster of selfishness and callousness, but Charles (reckless and unthinking as he might be at the moment) was never that. And the mischief had surely much to compensate it in that atmosphere of fondness which was the quality of Lord Holland's defect, and than which parents can give their children no more precious memory. 'I dined at home to-day *tête-à-tête* with Charles, intending to do business, but he has found me pleasanter employment. I grow immoderately fond of him.' Charles was rising three when that was written.

Unfortunately, Lord Holland's theory was not followed just when it should have been. When Charles first went to Eton he was a good boy, anxious to learn; his affectionate

father took him away from his books to Spa, sent him nightly with a pocket of gold to the gaming-table—that pretty, gaudy, gay room, I suppose, which Belgian kill-joys have lately abolished: I can see the boy punting in it—and if Charles's biographer, Lord John Russell, recorded truly, arranged for him to take a still more serious step in a man of the world's education. It is not surprising to learn that the discipline of Eton suffered on Charles's return. The same thing happened with Oxford. He wanted to read, but his reading was interrupted in the same manner. 'Charles is now at Oxford, studying very hard, after two months at Paris, which he relished as much as ever. Such a mixture was never seen, but, extraordinary as it is, it seems likely to do very well.' So wrote the judicious parent, and presently followed the two months with two years on the Continent. The wonder is that Charles read at all; but read he did, and gained scholarship enough to give him a solace and pleasure all his life. You cannot calculate the effects of system on genius, and I do not doubt that Lord Holland could have made a lively defence of his. If the reader would know

more about it all, he must go to Lord John Russell, or preferably, I think, to the fine and sagacious work (granted its Whiggery) of Sir George Trevelyan. I shall be accused of padding, as it is.

So, this strange education over, his novitiate in gambling and raking done, ardent for more, a store of scholarship in his head, more than one foreign language fluent and correct on his lips, hearty and brilliant, in a way a finished man of the world, not yet twenty, Charles Fox came to the shelter of Mackie the oilman, in Piccadilly. With him came Richard Fitz-Patrick, like him in tastes and habits, of creditable parts, distinguished for a peculiar sweetness and grace of manner—Old Q. left him a legacy merely as a recognition of it—but remembered chiefly as Fox's bosom friend. I may add a word about his after life, since it is, I fear, more or less forgotten. He served with credit in the American War, of which he disapproved, but put his duties as a soldier before his opinions as a politician, and was of some account as a writer, being author of the

best part of the *Rolliad*. Also he spoke on occasion in Parliament. But mostly he was a man of pleasure—his own and others', for he was universally popular. He could not stand the pace as Charles stood it. The gossip Creevey was present in 1803 at a meeting of Fox's friends, including Fitz-Patrick, and says they had 'all the air of shattered debauchees'—all but the indomitable Charles; for 'the old leader of the gang might really pass for the pattern and effect of domestic good order.' However, he lived till 1813, and we have it on the same authority that his last words were 'la pièce est finie,' uttered in the usual cool and determined tone. Creevey adds that he was 'by far the most clever of the quiet class I have ever seen, and the most perfect judgment of any class.'

How did the gay and humorous Charles, and the quiet and sweet-mannered Richard, pass their time when they lived in Piccadilly? Cards, as we know, consumed a terrible amount of it, and all the money they could borrow. Remembering their youth and their persistent ill luck, one can hardly doubt that they were plundered,

especially since it was at games of pure chance that they always lost: had he stuck to whist and piquet, Charles, it was said, would have made an income by his skill. Then, as a consequence, there were hours spent in the dismal offices of the cent. per cent. fraternity, arranging complicated systems of bonds and annuities, and heaven knows what devices. Then the bottle, I am afraid, consumed time and health to a deplorable extent, and much time went in wagering — not always unconnected with the former pursuit, as the signatures in the betting-book at Brooks's occasionally testify. Horse-racing, if not less obnoxious to morality, was at least an amusement less harmful to health. And, of course, it would be absurd to pretend that there was not on the scene an appearance, now and then, of some Perdita Robinson or other. The House of Commons had to take its chance with all this, but political ambition was less exigent in those days than it is now. At this time, Charles was in his chrysalis state as a supporter of the wicked Duke of Grafton—whose vices, I regret to say, failed to shock him—and a bulwark of

privilege and corruption. It was a colt's exercising canter; when he took to real racing he found out what he really thought.

There remains one occupation to notice, which is agreeably innocent in the midst of all this rakishness. Charles and his friends were devoted to 'amateur theatricals,' and took them with the profound gravity and sense of importance which that fashion seems always to impose on its followers. They worked at acting with enthusiasm, frequently exchanging parts. FitzPatrick was the better of the two in 'genteel comedy,' Fox in tragedy. It is probable, by the way, that the training of memory and voice his acting involved was of great service to Fox afterwards as an orator, because, as Sir George Trevelyan acutely and truly remarks, he was the last man in the world consciously to study for effect in speaking. There is a tradition that Garrick snubbed amateurs, and Sir George surmises that Fox dropped acting when he became a friend of the master. In any case, he gave it up when he was twenty-four. But at the period we are concerned with he took it with immense seriousness, rebuking his elder

brother for a falling off in enthusiasm and persuading people to act wherever he went.

And so, gaily squandering his time and money and splendid abilities in these various distractions, I take my leave of the young Charles Fox.

George Selwyn's sojourn in Piccadilly was when he also was a young man, some twenty years earlier than Charles Fox. In 1746, a correspondent writes to 'George Selwyn, Esq., in Piccadilly opposite St. James's Church,' and another in 1747 to him 'at Mr. Lane's, in Piccadilly,' and I think we may suppose it was the same lodging. I trust the nearness of the church profited George, but I am inclined to doubt it. This was soon after the time when he was 'sent down' from Oxford for a prank which the donnish view of the day considered blasphemous, and which in any case was probably tipsy. In London he lived the life of a man-about-town, and it was long before the day when he gave up cards as consuming too much of three good things, time, health, and money. It was indeed much the same life as Charles Fox's, only

led more indolently and ironically, and with much less zest.

I think the evidence of the Selwyn correspondence—those delightful four volumes of letters to him, I mean; for his own letters, which the Historical MSS. Commission unearthed some years ago, are all of his later years—shows that he was much the same as a young man as he always was—a calm, amused, mocking, but not unkindly George Selwyn, needing excitement, and so gambling, but extremely vexed with his folly when he lost; a good friend, an exceedingly inactive citizen. He can hardly have developed at this time that extraordinary worship of children which later on distinguished him, but he had already, I think, that morbid interest in crime and criminals, and executions and death generally, which report probably exaggerated — as he, almost vehemently for him, once protested — but which certainly existed in him. 'If Mr. Selwyn calls,' said the first Lord Holland, on his death-bed, 'show him up: if I am alive, I shall be glad to see him, and if I am dead, he will be glad to see me.' It was a really curious trait,

really hard to reconcile with his devotion to youth and freshness and innocent gaiety. Another he had—and paid a heavy toll in chaff for—was rare in young men of that day, or indeed of any day: except as friends, he was absolutely indifferent to women. Altogether, the psychology of George Selwyn presents the attraction of the abnormal. He is a graver ghost than the general for Piccadilly, even in his early days when he lived there—a benevolent figure, greatly loved, full of humour, and yet having about him withal a faint, vague, intangible suggestion of the sinister.

Any abnormality there may have been in George Selwyn is slight indeed beside that of William Beckford, who wrote *Vathek* so wonderfully well, and built 'Fonthill' so wonderfully foolishly. There was a strain of madness in Beckford, we can hardly doubt; and by the way, George Selwyn himself (seeing him, of course, when Beckford was a very young man), prophesied he would die in a madhouse. As a fact, he only built one—for surely to impoverish an immense fortune by building an enormous

pile and stuffing it full of rare things, is an action less than sane. A weird and definitely sinister figure this, for all his imagination and taste, one with whom it is not pleasant to dwell. We need not, for he is only vaguely said to have lived in Piccadilly, and he does not belong to London at all. He was one whose life the world was quite content should be spent in privacy, and Piccadilly is not a private place.

I want a nicer person to end the chapter sweetly. Fanny Burney comes into mind. Did she really live at No. 89, at the corner of Half Moon Street? I have Mr. Wheatley's authority for saying so, but her biographers are silent about it. Certainly she lived in the neighbouring Bolton Street in the last years of her life. But Mr. Wheatley says she lived at 89 Piccadilly at the corner of Half Moon Street—a house which had been a tavern, giving its name to the street, was in her time a linendraper's, and now, after being a 'brush warehouse' when Mr. Wheatley wrote, is a linendraper's again,—and I refuse to disbelieve him. It must have been in her old age when she was

M. D'Arblay's widow. The wit which had inspired *Evelina* and her far more memorable diary no doubt remained with her, though active no longer. Walter Scott, who met her at this time, describes her as 'an elderly lady, with no remains of personal beauty, but with a simple and gentle manner, a pleasing expression of countenance, and apparently quick feelings. She told me she had wished to see two persons—myself, of course, being one, and the other George Canning. This was really a compliment to be pleased with—a nice little handsome pat of butter made up by a "neat-handed Phyllis" of a dairymaid, instead of the grease fit only for cart-wheels, which one is dosed with by the pound.' A charming old lady to talk with, one cannot doubt, telling one demurely humorous stories of that appalling dull Court of George the Third, at which she had a post for some depressing years, and commenting cleverly on things in general. A nice, lady-like, and religious person to stand beside and throw into relief the irresponsible Charles, and the worldly George, and the wonderful, weird Beckford.

CHAPTER XV

SOME OTHER HOUSES

THIS is a book of personalities more than of anything else, but one must not be too exigent in the matter, or omit altogether this or that building or event, because no decisively individual person comes out of it. Buildings, too, may have a personality of their own, which, provided they are gone from our visible life, may fit these pages. There 's the St. James's Hall, for example, which stood for something definite while it lived, and is now no more. 'When the lute is broken, sweet sounds are remembered not,' says Shelley, but many a lover of good music must sigh as he passes in Piccadilly the place where it stood. More often she than he, I suppose, since one's recollection of Monday Pops is of audiences mostly feminine. For my part, I fear my association with the hall chiefly relates to the

Christy Minstrels, whose agreeable mixture of sentimental ballads and comic songs, interspersed with the lively dialogue of the funny man at the corner, and the serious man in the middle, delighted my youth. Dear creatures, I can still see the whites of their eyes. Then there was the Egyptian Hall on the other side of the way, so lately abolished, where an earlier generation flocked to Albert Smith, and a later to Maskelyne and his wonders—happily still with us somewhere else. And now am I rewarded for my latitude, for by right of the Egyptian Hall there comes to haunt Piccadilly a personality most distinct—sad, touching, and tragical. I mean poor Haydon, the painter.

In 1846 he exhibited here his 'Burning of Rome by Nero' and 'The Banishment of Aristides,' and at the same time, as the luck of his life had it, Tom Thumb was being shown here to our enthusiastic and intelligent public. Poor Haydon! 'They rush by thousands,' he wrote in his diary, 'to see Tom Thumb. They push, they fight, they scream, they faint, they cry help! and murder! and oh! and ah! They see my bills, my boards, my caravans, and don't

read them. Their eyes are open, but their sense is shut. It is an insanity, a *rabies*, a madness, a *furor*, a dream! Tom Thumb had 12,000 people last week. B. R. Haydon, 133½ (the ½ a little girl). Exquisite taste of the English people.' Two months later he killed himself in his studio. Well may his spirit linger here, where this last failure—with the rejection of his cartoon for the decoration of the Palace at Westminster—finally broke his heart.

And yet I do not know if one should speak of 'poor Haydon,' for all his disappointments and embarrassments. He was a born and incessant fighter, and such men generally find a pleasant savour in life. Fighting debt and disappointment may be sad work, but fighting people is glad work, and Haydon was always fighting people. Moreover, he was fighting Academicians, and artists who fight Academicians always seem to have a peculiar zest and delight in the business. Nor, whatever his personal fortune, was he always unsuccessful in a cause. When Lord Elgin brought the Marbles which go by his name to London, and stored them in Gloucester House—which was 137

Piccadilly—the Academicians pooh-poohed them, and Haydon took the lead in enthusiastic eulogy, and, as we know, it was Haydon who prevailed. Then, too, he had a complete and indomitable belief in himself, in all that he did and all that he said. His theory of the painter's art—which, to put it simply, was that portrait-painting was rubbish, and that imaginative historical pictures were 'high art,' the real thing, has gone the way of other dead theories, and of his practice a specimen or two may remain obscurely—one hangs in a Strand restaurant — but he believed thoroughly in both, and that alone is enough to make a normally healthy man a happy one. Again, his method of fighting debt, which was simply incurring fresh debt, from friends or patrons or money-lenders indifferently, however much it may prolong the deplorable situation, does not involve, on the whole, the maximum of discomfort. He is said, with verisimilitude, if not with truth, to have been the original of Charles Lamb's great borrower, the man who went splendidly forth borrowing and to borrow, who 'anticipated no excuse and found none.' The

description of his appearance—'a cheerful, open exterior, a quick, jovial eye, a bald forehead, just touched with grey (*cana fides*)'—applies to Haydon's, and can such an appearance be that of an unhappy man? One pities the last moments, the tragic end, which a definite malady of the brain induced, but on the whole this was a happy man. I revise my description of his ghost. Even in Piccadilly, outside the scene of his defeat at the Egyptian Hall, I think he still carries himself bravely; angry, no doubt, and perhaps violent, but not 'poor Haydon.'

Being on this subject, we may as well go down to the corner of Park Lane, where stood Gloucester House until only the other day. There was a scene of pleasant enthusiasm there when Haydon took Fuseli to see the Elgin Marbles, and the latter capped everything t'other enthusiast would say, with his 'De Greeks were Godes! de Greeks were Godes!' Otherwise this house was remarkable only as that of the late Duke of Cambridge. As indomitable as our painter in his way, he had happily—since the Crimea — nothing personal to fight against but Time, and Time had seldom a

tougher antagonist. It is agreeable to think of this fine octogenarian, enjoying his happy life, his stiff opinions, and his splendid Guelph constitution to the last.

Let us cross the road. The Green Park is not, as a whole, part of our subject, but the Ranger's Lodge, or more properly the Deputy-Ranger's Lodge, which stood inside it, opposite Down Street, until 1841, was numbered 150 Piccadilly. A cheerful, not uncomely house to live in; white, with a dome over part of it, surrounded by trees, built in 1768 by Robert Adam, but designed, according to a popular and rather improbable belief, by George the Third. George Selwyn wanted the Deputy-Rangership, so that he might live opposite his friend Old Q., but it was given to Lord William Gordon, one of three remarkable brothers.

Really an interesting trio, those three Gordons. The third, Lord George, dwarfs the others in notoriety, for he was the Lord George of the Gordon Riots. Of course, it may not be the kind of distinction a family would most care about, that a member of it should incite a mob of bigots, assisted by a

mob of criminals, to terrorise London for days, and burn an immense amount of property, and that he should subsequently be sentenced to Newgate for a libel on the Queen of France, and die there, a convert to Judaism: the distinction, however, cannot be denied. The eldest brother, the third Duke of Gordon, wrote that excellent and famous song, 'There's cauld kail in Aberdeen,' and ducal poets are not frequent. Also, he was the husband of Jane, the rival on the Tory side—an inferior rival, it must be said, but still a rival—of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, on the Whig: a handsome woman, this Duchess of Gordon, and a very potent lady. A fair woman illumines the life of our Lord William also, none other than Lady Sarah Lennox, who ran away with him from her first husband, Sir Charles Bunbury, the father of the Turf. Their union was but temporary, and divorce is not perhaps so rare an incident as poetry —certainly was not then—in the life of the aristocracy; still, to run away with the most beautiful woman of one's time, the beloved of a king and the mother of heroes, is a distinction—however much to be re-

gretted, reader, by you or me—in the life of any man. There is no mention of Lord William in Lady Sarah's charming letters. Her worthy and affectionate husband and her sons, the Napiers, may well have banished from her mind all sentimental regret for this lover of her youth; whether she left him, or he her, does not appear; a romantic reader is permitted to fancy her sighing in after years when she went along Piccadilly and passed the Ranger's Lodge. Lord William did not die until 1823, when, if I remember rightly, Lady Sarah was living in London, old and blind.

We return to paint and painters for a moment. Lord William Gordon had a lovely daughter who sat to Sir Joshua Reynolds for his 'Heads of Angels,' of which most of us have seen a print, in 1786. The picture was in the Lodge until Lord William's death, and is now in the National Gallery. It is somewhat melancholy to relate that the original of the lovely child in the picture died in the Lodge, an old maid, in 1831. Ten years later, Lady William, the last survivor of the household, died also, and then the house was pulled down. Two

figures of fallow deer which adorned it, cast in the old sculpture-yard in Engine Street (now Brick Street), are all that remain of it, or, so far as I know, of the famous yard itself. They are to be seen on either side of Albert Gate, as you go into Hyde Park at Knightsbridge. And of the Deputy-Ranger's Lodge let so much have been said.

We go up Piccadilly again as far, nearly, as Stratton Street, because I have not yet discoursed on the stirring and noisy event which happened at No. 80 in 1809.

Sir Francis Burdett had married a daughter of Thomas Coutts (by whom, as everybody knows, he was the father of the Baroness Burdett-Coutts), and lived next door to his father-in-law. It is to the credit of Thomas Coutts that he supported his son-in-law in his political activity, by which he had nothing to gain: on the contrary, it is said George the Third withdrew his account from Coutts's bank when Thomas had paid Sir Francis's election expenses. Burdett was a sincere and disinterested reformer of undoubted abuses, and even in

his hey-day would have seemed to us a very mild politician. In his later years he was on the Conservative side. But up to 1830 or so he was regarded as a dangerous Radical.

> 'Who are now the people's men,
> My boy Hobby O?
> There's I and Burdett—Gentlemen,
> And blackguard Hunt and Cobby O,'

as Byron said in the ballad which so infuriated his friend Hobhouse. The trouble, which ended in one of the greatest uproars Piccadilly has known, arose simply from Burdett's printing and selling as a pamphlet (after it had appeared in Cobbett's *Register*) a speech he had made in the House of Commons. The Government saw a chance of annoying Sir Francis, who had so often annoyed the Government; he was accused of breach of privilege, and the Speaker issued a warrant for his arrest.

Then the fun began. Burdett refused to surrender, and entrenched himself in No. 80, which was garrisoned by volunteers. The Government was not sure of its position, and its lawyers did not know what to advise.

The very troublesome body known as 'the Westminster mob'—Westminster was Burdett's constituency—saw its opportunity for a congenial row and flocked to Piccadilly. Then the Government turned out Life Guards, in spite of the prayer of the Sheriff Matthew Wood, and the Westminster Committee went to support Sir Francis with the ingenious idea that the civil powers should arrest the officers. What with this and that, it is not surprising that there was a riot, and Windham notes in his Diary: 'Found Life-Guards hunted by and hunting the mob; good deal of disturbance.' There must have been nearly as much noise and hubbub in Piccadilly as the motor-omnibuses make now. The Guards charged, and the mob retaliated with the nickname 'Piccadilly butchers.' On the fourth day after the issue of the warrant, No. 80 was forcibly entered, and Sir Francis—who evidently had a sense of drama—was found in an attitude of studied calm, teaching one of his children the provisions of Magna Charta, and supported by the ladies of his family. A verse of the day commemorates the scene.

'The lady she sate and she played on her lute,
And she sang, "Will you come to the bower?"
The sergeant-at-arms had stood hitherto mute,
And now he advanced like an impudent brute,
And said, "Will you come to the Tower?"'

To the Tower they took him, and there he stayed for several weeks, and when he came out, Piccadilly enjoyed another rumpus. People lined the streets all the way from the Tower to Stratton Street, scaffolding was put up in Piccadilly, banners were made ready with 'Magna Charta,' 'The Constitution,' 'Burdett for ever,' and so forth, inscribed on them, and the crowd looked forward to an entertaining procession. Sir Francis, however, seems to have had enough fuss, and went away secretly from the Tower by water, a neglect of a politician's first duty which brought upon him much unpopularity. But the crowd was not to be cheated; it expected a procession, and a procession it would have. So an empty car, accompanied by the banners, was dragged along to Stratton Street, which it reached about eight o'clock, and later on the mob really enjoyed itself; it ordained a general illumination, and smashed the windows of those

who refused to light up. So all ended happily.

Sir Francis Burdett continued to be a reforming member, and his house in Piccadilly was more than once the centre of an uproar. Walter Scott was plagued by one in 1820, as was told in the chapter on him. Gradually, however, he ceased, becoming a model fox-hunting country gentleman; and quiet, but for the cobble-stones and the traffic, would have reigned outside No. 80.

I protest I have wellnigh exhausted the private houses in Piccadilly which give us personalities or events. I shall be grieved if I am proved mistaken, but I think only two remain. One was a very splendid house, built on the sites of 146 and 147 towards the end of the eighteenth century, and it housed a very splendid personage. Monsieur Charles Alexandre de Calonne had been Comptroller of Finances in France, and brought with him something more material than financial knowledge when he removed to England in 1787. For he was able, his excellent taste leading him to Piccadilly, to take the two numbers mentioned, one not

contenting him, and to make a fine house of the two, and to set about furnishing it in a manner conforming. Unfortunately, he had not time to finish a noble gallery for his pictures, when the Revolution broke out, and loyalty sent him to Coblentz to join the princes. His property also he devoted to the cause, and his pictures were sold by auction. So brief was the period of his splendour in England, but he gives a fine touch to 146 and 147.

The other house gives a dramatic and lurid finish to this chapter. I have gone for my knowledge about it, by the way, to a source so little lurid and dramatic as *The Economic Journal* for 1891, in which Mr. Henry Higgs has an essay on Richard Cantillon. Richard Cantillon's importance for the study of economics need not concern us: it is enough to mention that he was of importance among the Physiocrats, and had a considerable influence on Adam Smith—in a word, that he was distinctly somebody from an intellectual and scientific point of view. Like Calonne, a financier, like him also he was a magnificent man. He was of an ancient Irish family, but was always asso-

ciated with France, where he made his money, and he wrote his economic work in French. He grew enormously rich by banking—his enemies said by usury; in fact, they went so far as to prosecute him both in France and England on this count. He won his cases, but there is no doubt that he made large sums by taking advantage of other people's need for ready money: we won't quarrel about names. In any case, he gained much money and spent it splendidly. After 1720 he lived chiefly in London, but his residence among us does not concern my pages until 1734, when he was living in Piccadilly, at the corner of Albemarle Street. Having got him there, unlike Calonne we need not, so to speak, let him go again, for, in his house at the corner of Albemarle Street, he was both murdered and burned.

On May 14—a Monday—1734, Cantillon supped in Queen Square, Westminster, and at ten o'clock was set down at his own door. The evidence of a servant tells us (in the *Old Bailey Sessions Papers*) that 'for about three weeks past his master had taken the key of the street-door up into his Bed-Chamber; and (the Examinant) believes

his reason for so doing was upon some Distaste he took to a Servant discharged three weeks ago; but that last night he left the key, together with his watch, below in the Parlour; and believes it was on account of this Examinant's being to go early in the morning to take a Box for him in the Opera'; a glimpse of his artistic tastes—'because that he gave him directions for that purpose . . . his master last Night . . . undressed himself in the Parlour as usual,'—I conjecture the coldness of an English May—'took his candle and Book, and went up to Bed soon after; and told the Examinant he would read.'

And then there was a fire, which consumed the house and Cantillon with it. At first his blameworthy practice of reading in bed was supposed to have been the cause, but it was found out afterwards that the discharged servant of the narrative, one Joseph Denier, *alias* Le Blanc, had entered the house with the connivance of the other servants, had murdered Cantillon, and set fire to the house, after robbing it, to conceal the crime. He escaped to Holland: the others were tried and acquitted. Cantillon had had a great

reputation for wealth, and the Londoners of that day thought his house must have been full of money. And so we have a weird picture for a Piccadilly May morning—people bending over the ashes, sifting, sifting them for gold.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SHOPS AND THE TAVERNS

THE prejudice against trade is quite a modern sort of snobbishness. Down to the eighteenth century—and there are later instances still—it was common for country gentlemen to apprentice their younger sons to tradesmen in the nearest town, and every one knows that the City merchants of old days were very often men of ancient family and gentle breeding. When there was a Court party in bitter opposition to the City party, the prejudice had some natural and excusable reason in it; nowadays, I imagine, its chief motive force is the desire of people, in our tiresome and incessant social scramble, to make the most of their own advantage by insisting on a social disability in others, and it exposes its meanness and futility by ceasing im-

mediately when the trading is on a large scale. Happily, it is nearly dead among the intelligent, but its stupidity annoys me, and I am sorry, therefore, that I cannot help to slay it, in my remarks on the old shops of Piccadilly, by pointing to a number of bygone tradesmen with beautiful, or at any rate interesting qualities. Alas! I cannot. Men who build up and run successful businesses have intelligence and strength of character, and most often prudence and temperance. But these are cold virtues, not striking or picturesque. Their useful lives are necessarily a little humdrum or so. Nothing very passionate or romantic is likely to be recorded of them. So one falls back on the characters of the shops, which, of course, may have an individuality of their own, partly made up of association with famous customers. Their present functions —where they still exist—are of course beside my theme, but they have ghostly memories.

Among the shops of Piccadilly, booksellers have been from very early days honourably prominent. There was Wright's at 169, for example, where the *Anti-Jacobin* was published, and where, indeed, the editors

laboured on the first floor. I fear that few of my readers, to whom this is news, are likely to go and gaze reverently on the building. Social satire, when it is really good, is more or less for all time, but political satire dies. We all know 'The Needy Knife-grinder,' but how many of us know anything else which appeared in the *Anti-Jacobin*? However, George Canning was greater than the paper he inspired, and Wright's shop (as Hatchard's a little later) must have known him well. He lived, for a while, nearly opposite, in Albany, and must have been a familiar figure crossing Piccadilly.

In and outside Wright's shop there took place a famous row—one might have had a separate chapter on the rows of Piccadilly. A violent row, but not on a great scale, like Sir Francis Burdett's, or a romantic attempt at murder, like Blood's on the Duke of Ormonde, or even a gentlemanly row, like my Lords Bath and Hervey's duel just inside the Green Park; only one of those unseemly scuffles which were all that literary men—in past ages, of course, I mean—were generally able to accomplish. Gifford was

a great critic and editor, as you know, and Wolcot, known as 'Peter Pindar,' was also a great critic, and they hated one another. Gifford wrote an 'Epistle to Peter Pindar,' in which he remarked that

> 'Thou canst not think, nor have I power to tell
> How much I scorn and loathe thee—so farewell.'

It was rather a boyish insult, and I can lay my hand on my heart and say that if any one said it to me I should laugh. Wolcot, however, was furious, and waited for Gifford outside Wright's, and rushing after him into the shop gave him one on the nob with a stick. But Gifford, who in boyhood had used his hands at sea, and in a bootmaker's shop, was too strong for Wolcot, and rolled him in the gutter. I hope he did it without assistance, but there is a regrettable mention of a bystander's seizing Wolcot's arm. He was really very silly to mind Gifford's loathing him.

No such painful scene ever troubled the peace of Hatchard's, which was originally hard by, at 173. For my knowledge of this famous shop's history, I am indebted to an interesting book about it written by

Mr. Arthur Humphreys, who does well to be proud that the business over which he presides has such a long and full tradition. Of the original Hatchard, however, who had his training as a bookseller with the celebrated Tom Payne, and set up for himself at 173 in 1797, paying £31, 10s. for the goodwill, and £40 rent, I do not find much to repeat. In fact, I think the most interesting thing Mr. Humphreys gives us about the man himself is a detailed description of his dress, for that allows us to picture him accurately as he moved among his customers. 'He was invariably dressed in black. His coat was of the style of a Bishop's frock-coat, waistcoat buttoning to the throat with an entirely plain front, and knee-breeches and gaiters.' A most respectable figure indeed. He did a thriving business in pamphlets, publishing, in the very first year, one which was an immense success, to wit, *Reform or Ruin: Take your Choice!* which appears to have been a spirited exhortation to respectability, and was written by no less a person than John Bowdler, father of the more notorious Thomas. Hatchard moved to 190 in 1801,

and later to 187, where the business now is. The political pamphlets were in the Tory interest, and the people who frequented Hatchard's to loaf and gossip there in the pleasant fashion of that day, were mostly on the Tory side. Sydney Smith glanced at them with unkind humour in an *Edinburgh Review* article in 1810. 'There is a set of well-dressed, prosperous gentlemen who assemble daily at Mr. Hatchard's shop, clean, civil personages, well in with the people in power, delighted with every existing institution, and almost with every existing circumstance, and every now and then one of these personages writes a little book, and the rest praise that little book, expecting to be praised in their turn for their own little books, and of these little books thus written by these clean, civil personages so expecting to be praised, the pamphlet before us appears to be one.' We have heard of such societies, mutually helpful in the book-pushing way, since that date —equally clean and civil, let us hope.

Hatchard's was also the rendezvous of societies more formally constituted. 'The Royal Horticultural Society' was formed

there, and so was a much more amusing society called the 'Outinian.' This was a body for the promotion of marriages, an object it was to attain by the dubious process of inquiring into the suitability of the contracting parties and supplying helpful information to members who intended to marry. It began its meetings by the consumption of tea and buns. John Hatchard, it appears, lent his initials as well as his premises to this agreeable little institution, and Mr. Humphreys wonders how he could have mixed himself up in so absurd an affair. I hope I may suggest, without disrespect to the notoriously altruistic nature of publishers, that John charged something. As for the appearance of Hatchard's when the clean and civil personages and the Outinians met there, it was much as it is now, with a porch outside for servants, a fireplace — those features restored by Mr. Humphreys—a table with the daily papers on it, and chairs for the weary and sleepy. It was lit, of course, by oil lamps. One may imagine all sorts of celebrities buying books at Hatchard's; of those more particularly associated with it were Macaulay, who used

to be sent in his youth to buy books there by Hannah More; Hannah herself, who longed as a girl 'to go to London to see Bishops and booksellers,' and William Wilberforce.

Booksellers, like brave men, need a bard if their memories are to live, and it is thanks to Mr. Humphreys that I have lingered over Hatchard's. But there are others who at least must be mentioned. Ridgway's was already established when Hatchard went to Piccadilly. Almon, opposite Burlington House also, was gone, succeeded by Debrett, who had been in partnership with him. A 'Letter to Edmund Burke' in 1782, refers pleasantly to 'that common sink of filth and fiction, the shop of Almon and Debrett in Piccadilly.' The reason of this description was that Almon's, a great Whig firm, had published the *Letters in Favour of Wilkes*, etc., in 1764. I wish we had still those political antagonisms in shops.

A shop which has followed Mr. Humphreys' good example and issued an account of itself, is that of Fortnum and Mason —ministering to the body as Hatchard's to the mind. 'A. M. B.' has written an

informing little brochure, with interesting pictures, about Piccadilly and this ancient house of good things to eat. It beats Hatchard's, indeed, in point of antiquity, for the business was started, appropriately, in the days of Queen Anne, who, as we know, liked tea—and things to eat and drink generally—and it has been in Piccadilly for a hundred and fifty years. Stewart's, too, the confectioner's at the corner of Bond Street, is an ancient affair. But I want a hero, as Byron says, or at least a character. . . . 'I'll therefore take our ancient friend' Hoby, the bootmaker, who was deservedly thought a character in his day. My seemingly irrelevant quotation was in fact a sub-conscious inspiration, for there is a reference to Hoby in one of Byron's letters. It was in 1820, at the time of Queen Caroline's trial, and Byron writes: 'I hear Mr. Hoby says that it makes him weep to see her—she reminded him so much of Jane Shore.' Jane Shore was a popularly pathetic part in the theatre of the time, but certainly it was not a happy simile for Hoby to make, and Byron wrote a verse on it.

'Mr. Hoby the Bootmaker's soft heart is sore,
For seeing the Queen makes him think of Jane Shore,
And in fact—'

He has two lines more, but in another letter he omits them, and so will I, on the whole. Hoby was in business at 160 Piccadilly in 1808, as an advertisement in *The Stranger's Guide to London* of that date informs us. He was a humorist, Hoby, as well as a man of sentiment. When a dissatisfied young ensign threatened to leave him, he turned to his shopman with an order to put up the shutters, for that all was over, he was a ruined man. A king among bootmakers was Hoby. To discourse much further of shops might bring me too near to writing a stranger's guide to London of my own. But I must not forego a compliment to Lincoln Bennett's hat-shop, for the distinction of standing where stood the house of Sir William Petty, founder of the Lansdowne family, and friend of Samuel Pepys.

One might think in one's haste that taverns would make a livelier subject, but the thoughtful reader is aware that few reflections are more melancholy than those

suggested by long-gone feasting and drinking. It is sadder to think that those who laughed, than that those who wept, are dead. Happily, however, the local associations of good cheer have a way of persisting. 'The White Bear Inn,' for example, had a history of nigh two hundred years before it disappeared, and the 'Criterion' restaurant keeps up the general association on its site. 'The White Bear' had memories of art about it. Benjamin West lay there when he arrived from America, and Luke Sullivan, who engraved Hogarth's 'March to Finchley,' died there. So died another engraver, one Chatelain, in 1744. He had in excess what I suppose the enemies of artists mean by the artistic temperament. He engraved for Mr. Toms, who paid him a shilling an hour; having worked for half an hour, he would demand his sixpence, and spend it forthwith in drink. As Mr. Wheatley says, this was a very improvident man. *Deus sit propitius.* . . . It was fitting he should die in a tavern. There was a 'Black Bear' as well as a 'White Bear' at this end of Piccadilly. The black rival was nearly opposite until 1820; not knowing its exact site, I am fain

to hope some restaurant or other stands on it.

There is no such doubt about 'The Gloster Coffee-house and Hotel,' for that was at the corner of Berkeley Street, where is now 'The Berkeley,' sometime called 'The St. James's Hotel.' 'The Gloster' was a very old house, and I find it flourishing in 1805, when a dear little book, called *The Picture of London*, advertises it as supplying 'good soups, dinners, wines, and beds.' The soups suggest a warm refreshment before starting by coach in the morning, and of course these Piccadilly inns were famous for coaching connections. There was 'The Three Kings' at No. 67, whence General Palmer started the first mail-coach to Bath, and where stands the present Hatchett's. There was 'The Old White Horse Cellar' at 155; the 'Ritz' now occupies that site. It is mentioned by Strype in 1720, and my *Picture of London* tells us that 'this house is well known to the public on account of the great number of stage-coaches which regularly call there. In a pleasant coffee-room passengers can wait for any of the stages, and travellers in general are well accommodated with beds.'

One imagines, of course, a great deal of bustle in these taverns and coffee-houses of old: it has been called to life in books often enough. The English, it is said—and truly, I think—have grown more reserved in manner, and certainly have grown more to a pattern. One must imagine many more eccentrics, much more shouting and advice and protest and argument than one can hear now at a railway station, more variety and colour of dress, too, and altogether a livelier and gayer scene.

While we are imagining, too, we must not forget the commonplace that the taverns were crowded with folk well acquainted with one another and talking intimately together, who now would go to clubs. That is still to some extent the case with the 'lower classes,' but with no others. Even Bohemia has left the tavern for the club, although I have known more than one public-house where artists of one sort or another were to be regularly found. Certainly no Squire Western of to-day, coming to London, would drink and collogue with the landlord of an inn, as Fielding's Squire Western did with him of 'The Hercules Pillars.' That

famous inn was at Hyde Park Corner, and stood there as late as 1797, being mentioned as early (by Wycherley, in his *Plain Dealer*) as 1676. The great Marquis of Granby, who gave his name to so many other inns, used to frequent it; and, as I said in my first chapter, Sheridan and Captain Mathews went there when they were interrupted in their duel about the melodious Miss Linley. There was many another tavern at Hyde Park Corner—a 'Red Lion' and a 'Golden Lion,' and so forth—and, by the way, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, a place called 'Winstanley's Water Theatre,' where mechanical contrivances astonished our simple ancestors. It advertised as its great attraction—in a *Guardian* of 1713—'6 sorts of wine and brandy, to drink the

a ghost started up before him. Winstanley's ghost, if it walks, must pass from the scene of his entertainment at Hyde Park Corner up Piccadilly to the site of the Egyptian Hall, and muse over conjuring improvements. Man and his marvels pass away, and it is not strange that Water Theatre and Egyptian Hall should be gone. But it does seem odd that of the eight, or so, public-houses at Hyde Park Corner, not one remains. The fact must sadden many a ghostly toper.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CHURCH AND THE END

It completes, so to say, the dignity of Piccadilly that St. James's Church should stand in it. And it is fitting, I think, that with the church my book should end. For whatever better and happier thoughts a church may suggest to others, to me at least it means, first and last, an insistence on mortality. It is always sad to come to the end of a thing one loves, and in parting from Piccadilly, which has been a labour of love to me to write about, I cannot but feel a sorrow not altogether sweet. St. James's Church and the memorials of its dead are not an unfit theme for my last chapter.

Not that the personal associations of the church are all melancholy, by any means. Harry Jermyn, who owned the ground on which it is built, was only sad in another

sense, and so was Charles the Second, who issued the letters patent for it. Yet Death, in a way, presided over its beginning, for both Harry Jermyn (made Earl of St. Albans and privately married to Henrietta Maria) and Charles himself died while it was building. It was finished and consecrated in 1685.

To enter on an architectural disquisition on its merits is happily not part of my duty. The reader probably knows them, or he can go see for himself. I do not think it Sir Christopher Wren's masterpiece, or fancy that his ghost haunts it in preference to St. Paul's. Quite the other way, in fact, for he had architectural troubles in connection with it. The steeple he designed was judged to be too expensive, and one designed by a carpenter in the parish, called Wilcox, which cost £100 less, was preferred. Bitter thoughts of Wilcox must occur to Wren if he revisits his work. But he was proud of the interior, and surely with justice. I know many churches more sympathetic to me, but the symmetry of the columns and roof, the whole fashioned with a sort of fine simplicity to seat as many worshippers as

possible with the means at the architect's command, contents our vision. The adornments I care for less, but will not dogmatise about taste.

From the first St. James's Church was fashionable, and its memories are mainly of fashionable folk and their ways. In Sir John Vanbrugh's *Relapse*, which was produced ten years or so after the church was finished, Lord Foppington, the type of all that was modish, tells us what sort of congregation sat there.

FOPPINGTON. Why faith, Madam, Sunday is a vile day, I must confess; I intend to move for leave to bring in a Bill, that players may work upon it, as well as the hackney-coaches. Tho' this I must say for the Government, it leaves us the churches to entertain us. But there again, they begin so abominably early a man must rise by candle-light to get dress'd by the psalm.

BERINTHIA. Pray which church does your lordship most oblige by your presence?

FOPPINGTON. Oh, St. James's, madam: there 's much the best company.

AMANDA. Is there good preaching too?

FOPPINGTON. Why, faith, madam, I can't tell. A man must have very little to do there, that can give an account of the sermon.

BERINTHIA. You can give us an account of the ladies, at least.

FOPPINGTON. Or I deserve to be excommunicated. There is my Lady Tattle, my Lady Prate, my Lady Titter, my Lady Leer, my Lady Giggle, and my Lady Grin. These sit in the front of the boxes, and all church-time are the prettiest company in the world, stap my vitals. Mayn't we hope for the honour to see your ladyship added to our society, madam?

AMANDA. Alas, my lord, I am the worst company in the world at church: I'm apt to mind the prayers, or the sermon, or——

FOPPINGTON. One is indeed strangely apt at church to mind what one should not do. But I hope, madam, at one time or other, I shall have the honour to lead your ladyship to your coach there.

I have copied out the whole passage, because it gives us, more vividly and truly than I can hope to, an idea of the church and its worshippers as it was when it first was used. We see the fine ladies sitting under Grinling Gibbons's altar-piece, and my lord ogling them, and leading his favourite to her coach, carefully the while—how curious are those changing affectations—mispronouncing his *o*'s. He led her, by

the way, not into Piccadilly, but into Jermyn Street, on which the church then fronted, as the more important street of the two.

It is possible that if my Lord Foppington had listened to the sermon he would not have understood it, but it is probable he would have heard a good one. The preferment has usually been held one of the prizes of the Church, and many of the incumbents have been made bishops—a few archbishops. Archbishop Tenison was the first Rector. Lord Foppington sat under Dr. William Wake, D.D., who also became Archbishop of Canterbury in due time. None of these incumbents, I hope and think, is likely to haunt the worldly scene of Piccadilly, though perhaps some of them like to linger, now and then, in the pleasant Rectory House, which suggests a dignified domesticity and seems out of place in that part of Piccadilly, now so little domestic. One of the curates, however, was so much at home in Piccadilly or wherever else Fate bestowed him, that I must, by no manner of means, exclude him from my pages. I mean the late Prebendary Brookfield, that gay

and accomplished humorist, father of Mr. Charles Brookfield, the player and playwright, who was curate under John Edward Kempe.[1]

Those of my readers—and I hope this means all of them—who have read the book Mr. Charles Brookfield and his wife wrote about the former's parents, will perceive at once that Prebendary Brookfield's—I say it without the least offence to his clerical character—is one of the most delightful ghosts they could meet in Piccadilly, and quite in touch with most of the spirits I have imagined there; so human was he, so sympathetic and debonair. His sermons in the church drew London; one of them, in which some incautious mistrust of the literal acceptance of divine writ was expressed, caused almost a scandal, and the good Lord Shaftesbury protested that 'the man's an atheist.' They were strikingly dramatic in tone, as one who used to hear them has told

[1] Prebendary Kempe died, at the age of ninety-seven, on the day I wrote this chapter. He used to relate how the Lord Derby, who was Prime Minister, sat in a gallery pew right over the pulpit, and would write notes for a speech there, sometimes looking over the rector's shoulder to see if the sermon was near its end.

me, and indeed, in Mr. Brookfield the father a fine actor was lost to the stage. It is recorded that he once kept a party in Trinity, Cambridge—it included the great Dr. Thompson and other serious and mature persons—rolling on the floor in laughter for an hour with his comic deliveries. He was, of course, an eagerly sought guest at great men's tables, and among others, that in Bath House, Piccadilly, saw him often. There was a touch of the abbé parson about him, just a suggestion of Thackeray's Reverend Sampson—*pour le bon motif*, as it were. Could I leave out such a jolly spirit as this? The reader would never forgive me.

But he must forgive me if I do no more than mention a few of the celebrated people who were christened or buried in St. James's Church. Their connection with Piccadilly is not sufficient for my rules. If the reader's imagination is equal to the picture of Lord Chesterfield—him of the letters and the manners and morals Dr. Johnson so bitterly described—of the famous Lord Chesterfield as a polite baby, I can gratify him with the knowledge that here Lord Chesterfield was

christened. So was the first William Pitt, who should have been a still more remarkable baby. Mrs. Delany, who lived so long and knew so many people, was buried here in 1788. James Dodsley the bookseller lies here, and James Gilray the caricaturist, who threw himself from the window of Miss Humphry's print-shop, in St. James's Street hard by. Tom D'Urfey was buried here and Dick Steele had placed a tablet with 'Honest Tom D'Urfey' on it at the entrance to the church in Jermyn Street. Mr. Wheatley tells us that 'the tablet was taken down some years ago as unsuited to the sanctity of the place.' It is not recorded, however, that the remains of Old Q. have been removed from underneath the altar. R.I.P.

And now I come to the end. Like most good-byes, this, too, is best said quickly. I confess to some sentiment in the moment. In spite of the horrors which an evilly inspired and absurdly called civilisation inflicts on the place now, I still feel something of the charm of Piccadilly, and I have laboured my best in gratitude. Well or ill,

the work is done, and the ghostly figures fade. One looks after them as they go, sadly, oneself to fade also, sooner or later, and belike—since the life of the dead is in the memory of the living—to fade far more completely. Harriot Mellon and Emma Hamilton, Fox and Byron, the Duke and Palmerston and Old Q., I take my leave of them, and Frederick Locker-Lampson gives me a too sadly fitting *envoi*. For it's

> '*Heu anni fugaces!* The wise and the silly,
> Old P. or Old Q., we must quit Piccadilly.'

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